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# JOURNAL

## OF THE

# ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY.

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ART. I.—*Notices of the Life of* HENRY THOMAS COLEBROOKE, Esq.,  
*by his Son.*

HENRY THOMAS COLEBROOKE, the subject of this memoir, was born in London, on the 15th June, 1765, and was the youngest of seven children. His father, Sir George Colebrooke, Baronet, was for many years chairman of the East India Company.

As a boy, he was of a quiet retired disposition, seldom mixing in any of the usual amusements of childhood, and was distinguished at an early age among his brothers and sisters for his extreme fondness for reading. In allusion to this, he used to say to them, that by his habits and tastes he was best fitted for the profession of a clergyman, and expressed a strong desire to his father that he might be placed in the church.

He was never at any school, but pursued his studies at his father's house under a tutor, and in the later period of his life he would appeal to this circumstance in his early history as a proof of the superior advantages of a home education. At the age of fifteen, he was as much advanced in his reading as most persons are at the time of leaving the universities. He was well read in the Greek and Roman classics, and deeply so in mathematics, and had mastered the French and German languages. I notice the age of fifteen as being that at which he was parted from his tutor, in consequence of a proposed arrangement for his immediate embarkation for India. The arrangement did not then take effect, and during the remainder of his stay in England (which was more than a year) he pursued his studies alone.

From the age of twelve to sixteen he resided with his family in France. In the spring of 1782, being appointed to a Writership in the Civil Service of Bengal, he proceeded to Portsmouth to embark, and was there at the time that the Royal George sunk at Spithead.

Indeed he might almost be said to have been an eye witness of that event; for being on the beach at the time, his attention was suddenly directed towards the spot where the ship had been, by the abrupt exclamation of some one near him, "Where is the Royal George?"—he turned, and the Royal George had disappeared.

He sailed in a store ship, and in company with the fleet which proceeded to the relief of Gibraltar, the memorable siege of which was then going on. In this as in other voyages he took great interest in the navigation of the ship, and never passed a day without taking an observation; a journal of which he always kept when at sea.

He was long on the voyage, and did not arrive in India until April, 1783. He was received in the house of his brother, Mr. (now Sir Edward) Colebrooke, who had preceded him to that country, and who appears to have found some difficulty in making him shake off the sedentary habits which had grown upon him. In a letter written shortly after his arrival, his brother describes him as having scarcely left his chair since he entered his house. Yet this sedentary disposition was accompanied by some inclinations not usually displayed by persons of so studious a habit. He is described to me by more than one person to have been at this period of life fond of dress; and an early letter shows that he had at that time an inclination towards play, as it alludes to his having conquered a passion for it, which his father feared in him.

After remaining for eight or ten months unemployed, he was placed in a subordinate capacity in the Board of Accounts, and this situation he held during the remainder of his stay at Calcutta. His official duties were light and unimportant, but the society of Calcutta at that time, which is very far from being favourably described in his own letters and in those of his brother, was not such as admitted of his devoting much time to study.

His early letters throw but little light on his pursuits. Soon after his arrival, he talks of applying for one of those appointments which his knowledge of the French language and manners rendered him peculiarly fit for. In the same letter, he adds, in answer to a question of his father, "There is no danger of my applying too intensely to languages. The one, and that the most necessary, Moors', by not being written bars all close application. The other, Persian, is too dry to entice, and is so seldom of use that I seek its acquisition very leisurely."

Shortly after this was written, he proposes a plan of study (the

<sup>1</sup> Hindustani.

only proposal of the kind that is contained in any letters written during the first few years of his Indian life.) He writes home for a complete set of the Greek and Roman classics. For the first year his letters are short, and contain little more than a bare recital of passing events. He soon, however, opens on a subject which more particularly marks his feelings, and exhibits him as discontented with his situation as most young men are for some time after their arrival in India. But there were circumstances in the times which rendered the situation of the Company's Civil Service peculiarly uncertain. The odium with which its members were generally regarded at home, which made Burke single out Warren Hastings to suffer for his own and the sins of the body, was then at its height, and the arrangements that were under discussion connected with the constitution of our Indian empire, created an alarm that the East India Company would be deprived of its political patronage, and that, under the excuse of the new measures requiring new men, their old dependants would be made to shift for themselves or turned out to make room for those who were to reap the benefit of the threatened change. Well or ill founded as the fears on this score may have been, his letters clearly show the very general alarm that was entertained. The service, in fact, was in a transition state from the lax habits which the old *régime* had permitted, to those, which under a better organised system have marked their character to the present day.

In this state of uncertainty regarding the future, his letters were filled with gloomy foreboding. At one time he talks of seeking a new profession ; at another of returning to Europe, and again he proposes to turn farmer and settle for a while in the country. But his feelings will be better understood after reading the following extracts from his letters :—

The effect of the arrival of Pitt's East India Bill is thus described in a letter written in July, 1785. "The numerous collectors with their assistants had hitherto enjoyed very moderate allowances from these employers, and which could not be made an object of reform, but to these they were able to add some profits which were in no respect detrimental to their masters, and which, being both known and avowed, could not be reckoned dishonest. Presents of ceremony, called nuzzers, were to many a great portion of their subsistence ; many likewise, by their knowledge of languages, or by some other means or qualifications, were able to do work for natives, from whom they received a consideration for it. All these sources, and more which it were superfluous to recite, are now dried up by

the operation of the Act; at least it is now dishonest, nay, infamous to draw aught from them; and the service is reduced to bare allowances from their employers."

What these allowances were, may be gathered from his stating in an after part of the letter, that he had received only Sa. Rs. 661,<sup>1</sup> for a twelvemonth past. In fact he declares himself to have been hitherto a considerable loser both of time and money, without a prospect for years to come (so much were their means reduced,) of obtaining sufficient to maintain him, and he seriously proposes a return to Europe.

"It would alarm you," he again writes, "could you transport yourself for an instant to this place, to see the distress and terror pictured in almost every countenance, under the actual operation of a load of debt, or the certain approaches of that burden. Even the parts of the Act intended for the benefit of the Company's service seem but little likely to avail us much. Several gentlemen have claimed appointments given to their juniors since the 1st of January; but the Board have as yet declined passing any decision upon them. However, on a gentleman's endeavouring to enforce his claim by strenuous argument, he was told that his spirited conduct might cost him the service."

In a letter written six months afterwards, he at last comes to this conclusion:—"The truth is, India is no longer a mine of gold; every one is disgusted, and all whose affairs permit abandon it as fast as possible. The occurrences of this year have led me to reflections on the peculiarities of a residence in this part of the world, which leave me very undecided what course to adopt. Our prospects appear so much more precarious than formerly, that a wish has arisen in my mind to prepare myself for a longer stay than I desire. It is easy to make oneself comfortable here, but it is seldom done, from the notion of returning early to Europe. Under these impressions, I have thoughts of setting myself down for a few years in a pleasant and solitary spot, with a little property, the improvement of which might employ my leisure, at the end of which time my rank in the service would probably bring me into the busy scene with rapid success. At present the temper is vainly fretted in continual labour for inadequate allowances, subject to the impositions of tradesmen, and the oppressions of the court. This has not yet been my case, but I am indeed a singular exception."

Complaints of the present, and schemes for the future, occupy no slight portion of his letters for the year following the date of

<sup>1</sup> About 807.

the last extract; but by this time he had been called into more active employ, and then, with fixed duties and adequate allowances, his mind was diverted to more interesting and useful trains of thought.

"I have at length become sensible," he writes, "of the absurd habit into which I have inadvertently fallen, of uttering groundless and exaggerated complaints against the country, my situation in it, &c. The only solid objection to India, is the great distance from our nearest friends, whom we cannot visit occasionally, as may be done from the West Indies, and almost any other foreign residence, except, indeed, Botany Bay."

In illustration of the tone of the foregoing letters, I may add, that he appeared to have inherited from his father, a disposition towards gloomy anticipations. At the time when public affairs in England were low, under the threat of a French invasion, his thoughts turned towards America, and he planned a quiet settlement in that country when he should have quitted India. He went so far at one time, as to invest money in the American funds. His opinions, too, on English politics generally, were far from exhibiting a sanguine habit of mind.

After residing for three years in Calcutta, he was appointed to the situation of Assistant to the Collector of Revenues in Tirut, and he remained in the revenue department, though not always in a subordinate capacity, for nearly nine years. The following letter was written shortly after his arrival at his new station. The first paragraph exhibits the degree in which he had turned his mind towards those subjects which afterwards engaged so much of his attention.

*"Near Patna, December 10, 1786.*

"MY DEAR FATHER,

"I have not been unmindful of the information required in your letter, nor had I been previously inattentive to the subject. I have perused most publications that related to such matters, and had verbal communications; but the result is unsatisfactory and desultory; and to connect the facts I have acquired so as to offer you an attempt deserving notice, will require further knowledge, which I hope to obtain from the Brahmins of this district, who have long enjoyed renown and high estimation for profound learning.

"My leisure from business and laziness is not considerable, and some I appropriate to the study of Arabic, with a view of having the smattering necessary to understand Persian well; and some to

a systematic pursuit of the Mussulman law; and thus you must lay your account on slow and distant progress."

The remainder of the letter is occupied with an account of the Hindu divisions of time, as exhibiting "the precision of their astronomical knowledge in remote antiquity." It appears to have struck him much. "From what you have seen, I doubt not of your being pleased at seeing such accurate determinations. I have seen some observations on their Joogs, or long periods, and on some tables, which bear internal evidence of antiquity, and prove their knowledge of many points of astronomy which became involved in the darkness of declining literature, and have been revived by modern discoveries."

When fairly settled in the country, he acquired a fondness for field sports, which never left him until the approach of old age. In a letter written soon after he had left Calcutta, he says, that to describe his occupations would be little more than to give a list of game; and his letters for the several years following, generally allude to the keen delight with which he indulged in this animating pursuit. The subject is not dropped until he was removed to a station where no game was to be found.

Practice made him an excellent shot, a circumstance in which he took some pride. In his family circle he was fond of dwelling on the subject, much more so than on the triumphs which he afterwards achieved as a literary character; for in fact, he had little of the pride of authorship. He would converse with pleasure concerning his own works, but more in the spirit of a man entering upon topics which had much engaged his attention, than with any disposition to overrate the value of those pursuits to which he had principally attached himself. He seemed rather inclined to *under-rate* them, as I shall point out hereafter.

What with sporting and official avocations, he found little time for literary pursuits. His father constantly pressed for information regarding the religion and literature of the East, to which his son as constantly pleaded want of leisure. This defence is set up at the outset of the following letter, in reply to inquiries of another nature. The whole letter affords a striking picture of the writer's mind. Some of the observations sound oddly from one who was afterwards to become so zealous an Orientalist.

" July 28, 1788.

" I am now to acknowledge your letters of February and March. Such inquiries as I may be able to make respecting the Trade and Manufactures, I shall not fail in ; but I do not expect you will ever obtain satisfaction on these points. As for myself, (setting aside unfitness,) leisure is wanting. The daily occupations of my station, leave scarcely time for necessary relaxation, and certainly leave me but a small share of spirits for other pursuits, whilst the Board continues to censure our tardiness, in lieu of rewarding our diligence. With respect to obtaining the assistance of inquisitive persons, it will be less easy than you may have imagined ; I know but two general descriptions of people in this country, I mean men of business, and men of pleasure, to both of whom such applications would seem ridiculous. If you except some two or three, there are no men of science ; and as for the *Amateurs*, they are not numerous, and are, to the best of my judgment, nothing less than pedantic pretenders, who do not seek the acquisition of useful knowledge, but would only wish to attract notice, without the labour of deserving it ; and this is readily accomplished by an ode from the Persian, an apologue from the Sanscrit, or a song from some unheard-of dialect of the Hinduee ; of which the amateur favours the public with a *free* translation, without understanding the original, as you will immediately be convinced, if you peruse that repository of nonsense, the Asiatic Miscellany.

" I now proceed to your last (viz. of 5th March). The third volume of the 'Institutes of Ackber,' was, I believe, sent by Edward. If so, and it have miscarried, I will send mine. The whole work is a dunghill, in which a pearl or two lie hid. I have never yet seen any book which can be depended upon for information concerning the real opinions of the Hindús, except Wilkins's Bhagavat Geeta. That gentleman was Sanscrit-mad, and has more materials, and more general knowledge respecting the Hindús, than any other foreigner ever acquired since the days of Pythagoras.

" You seem to expect that I should say something as to the treatment which the natives of Hindústán have experienced at the hands of the English. I certainly have been long enough in the country to have formed my opinion, and having not been concerned in a single act of rapacity, that opinion is impartial ; but it would take much time to put my ideas into any kind of order ; I shall, therefore, just set down a few desultory thoughts. The conduct of our armies has never been marked with cruelty or rapacity. The fortunes which have been acquired in the military line, have with few



exceptions, been acquired at the expense of Government, not at that of the people. The exceptions I allude to, will be explained hereafter, and do not relate to the conduct of men in the field. The English have not in the least assimilated with the natives, nor ever carried on social intercourse with them. The cause of this is not so much in the English themselves resident in these countries, as in the regulations of Government, which have confined the Europeans to the Presidency, and to the principal factories, where it would be strange if they sought the society of the natives, while a numerous society offered itself of their countrymen, whose manners of course correspond with each individual's habits; to which those of a native are almost diametrically opposed. Prohibited from acquiring property in land, or even being any ways concerned in its culture, an European can never think of a permanent settlement in the East. He feels himself an alien, a bird of passage, he never can make himself comfortable and secure; and therefore he looks with an anxious eye, to the moment when he shall have a home, which can only be had in Europe. Why else are so many Europeans content to end their days in America? even in the West India Islands? and why does it never occur in the happier climate of Bengal to fix one's residence for life in the 'Paradise of Regions?' The religion and manners of the Muhammedans do not assimilate more easily with the disposition and prejudices of Hindús, than do those of the English. But Muhammedanism and Christianity are more nearly and easily connected; and I think I might venture to assert, that if permitted, many Europeans would settle in the internal part of the Company's dominions, and in a short period live in habits of familiarity with the neighbouring natives.

"Whatever be the cause, the fact is certain, and the consequences obvious. Never mixing with natives, an European is ignorant of their real character, which he therefore despises. When they meet, it is with fear on one side, and arrogance on the other. Considered as a race of inferior beings by the appellation of black fellows, their feelings are sported with, and their sufferings meet no more compassion than those of a dog or monkey.

"Contemptuous treatment is, however, the only injury usually received at the hands of their modern conquerors. It has been reserved only for a few chosen spirits to shock their religious prejudices, and to take their property by violence, fraud, or any of the modes which rapacity dictates. Nor do I believe that many instances occurred of that kind in this part of Hindústan, except during the administration of Mr. Hastings. Of the coasts of Coromandel and

Malabar, I do not pretend to speak ; but in Bengal our wars and public measures, with the exception of the successive depositions of Jaffier Aly and Cossim Aly, seem perfectly justifiable. During the period which followed the acquisition of the Dewany, the nazims were oppressed, the stipendiaries defrauded, and the treasures of the Company wasted, but the people were governed by nearly the same rules, and the taxes levied from them upon much the same principles, as under the former government.

“ It was Mr. Hastings who filled the country with collectors and judges, who adopted one pursuit—a fortune. Ignorant of the business on which they were employed, the members of provincial councils, and the collectors, entrusted the management of affairs to their dewans. These harpies were no sooner let loose upon the country, than they plundered the inhabitants with or without pretences, and, as a price of the sacrifice of every principle of honour, rendered to their employers a small proportion of their ill-gotten pelf. Justice was dealt out to the highest bidders by the judges, and thieves paid a regular revenue to rob with impunity. In this description I would not be understood without exceptions ; on the contrary, I am induced to hope, that near a third of the servants of the Company employed in such posts, can boast unspotted consciences ; but I fear the people have still been oppressed by their servants, though not with their knowledge or for their advantage.

“ The matter is now altered ; the Revenue servants for the most part understand and perform their duties, justice is impartially administered, crimes repressed, as far as in them lies, and the people are not oppressed for private lucre. The collectors and their assistants know how to make a profit without detriment to an individual, but even this is not now in practice.

“ But it is not alone for the employing Europeans in administering justice and collecting the revenues, that the administration of Mr. Hastings has excited the murmurs of the Hindús. Nor did his crooked politics and shameless breach of faith affect any but the princes and great men ; the deposition of zemindars, the plundering of begums, the extermination of the Rohillas, may be forgotten, but the cruelties acted in Goruckpore will for ever be quoted to the dishonour of the British name. My pen could not be equal to do justice to my feelings upon this subject. Mr. Burke, no doubt, will paint the scenes in glowing colours, and many witnesses are now in England, able and willing to prove the tyranny. This is, no doubt, that *something*, the prosecutors have to produce against Mr. H., the masked battery mentioned in your letter before me.

“But it is not the conduct of individuals that belongs to this question; the system upon which the British dominions have been governed in the East, has more affected the happiness of the people. To regulate nations, as an article of trade, for the profit which is to be derived, seems a solecism in politics; not to mention monopolies of salt and opium, or the principles upon which the Company's investment has been provided, I may confine myself to the stretching the land-rents to the utmost sum they can produce. A proprietor of an estate under the Mogul government, seldom paid half of the produce of his estate, and in small properties much less; he was further allowed to take credit for a certain sum by way of pension, or held rent-free lands in lieu thereof. Under the Company, a landholder is allowed ten per cent. of the net produce as his share, (if the lands be managed by another person,) and this frequently occurs:—an adventurer offers an enhanced rent; his proposals are accepted, he rack-rents the estates, the cultivators emigrate, and he leaves the property reduced, perhaps, to a third of its value. Sooner than be exposed to this, the landholder will often engage on the enhanced rates; but here a less ruin does not await him. Unable to make good his engagements, he falls into the grasp of the extortioner, his property is sold in liquidation of his balance. To elucidate this subject fully, would require much time, and might expose me to blame; but I have said enough to justify my conclusion, that although the conduct of the English in Hindústan has been misrepresented, and the crimes of a few exaggerated, and received as a specimen of the characters of the whole, yet the treatment of the people has been such as will make them remember the yoke as the heaviest that ever conquerors put upon the necks of conquered nations. By this time, you have not improbably repented having drawn me to this subject; and I therefore may quit it, never to treat it again, unless more fully, when it can be done at leisure by the fireside.

“I have another query to reply to, viz. whether I make great progress in Arabic. I must acknowledge that vain-glory, to which I am too much addicted, could alone have induced me to say anything on the subject. What I did say I do not recollect, but I never took up the pursuit but with a view to improve my knowledge of Persian, in which I at present have only acquired the language of business, and most of the classical books of which are unintelligible to one ignorant of the Arabic. The study, undertaken with many disadvantages, was never followed up with sufficient diligence; and the last twelve months have afforded me no leisure that I could be

disposed to employ otherwise than in relaxing. Thus much I am induced to believe, that the Arabic language is of more difficult acquisition than Latin or even than Greek; and although it may be concise and nervous, it will not reward the labour of the student, since in the works of science he can find nothing new, and in those of literature he could not avoid feeling his judgment offended by the false taste in which they are written, and his imagination being heated by the glow of their imagery. A few dry facts might, however, reward the literary drudge . . . . .

"Observing in a private letter that Mr. Burke has given great praise to Mr. Patterson, the *Rungpore investigator*, I beg to enter my solemn protest against your belief of his merits; Mr. Patterson's report was not founded upon evidence taken, and upon facts ascertained. Sent up to investigate accusations preferred against Raja Deby Sing, he received every petition presented, however improbable the facts asserted, and drew up his report upon no better ground than the tenor of the complaints delivered to him. To take the force of this remark you should be apprized, that to attract attention a native of this country aggravates the plain matter of his complaint with a variety of circumstances, which have no foundation in truth. He neither attempts nor is required to adduce proof of these adventitious circumstances, which all parties know the falsehood of; the act of oppression or extortion alone constitutes the merits of the cause. When that is proved, justice is done to him; and the falsehood and exaggerations sink into oblivion. It is for such a report and so prepared, that Mr. Burke has selected Mr. Patterson for his hero, unaware that a respectable Commission, consisting of three gentlemen of known abilities and integrity, with diligence unremitting, during many months investigated those matters, and that the result of their inquiries, and the whole purport of a large body of evidence, from witnesses produced on both sides, proved the assertions in Patterson's report groundless<sup>1</sup>.

"Your affectionate son,

"H. T. COLEBROOKE."

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Patterson's report carries an interest with it as being that from which Mr. Burke, in his opening speech upon the impeachment of Warren Hastings, drew the substance of a series of painful details and descriptions which created the most powerful effect upon the minds of his auditory. "In this part of his speech," says the compiler of the history of the trial, "Mr. Burke's descriptions were more vivid—more harrowing—and more horrific than human utterance, on either fact

The preceding letter shows him to have been so much interested in public affairs, that the reader will not be surprised to hear that the first publication which he gave to the world partook of a political character. It was entitled *Remarks on the Husbandry and Commerce of Bengal*, but it was not composed until a later period than we have as yet entered upon. The letters, written during the intervening time, show the bent of his mind to have still inclined towards the politics of India, while the author himself was fully engaged with his official duties:

The first occasion on which he was brought into notice, in this latter capacity, was connected with the inquiries that were then proceeding preparatory to that settlement of the Land Revenue, which was afterwards declared permanent by Lord Cornwallis.

From Tirut, where he was at first stationed, he had been removed in April, 1789, to an assistantship of a higher grade at Purneah. He was there (happily for himself) placed under a collector, who idled away his office hours, and was too glad to throw the ordinary duties of the station on so efficient an assistant. The extraordinary duties connected with the revenue settlement were of course then too burdensome for him, and he willingly accepted his deputy's assistance to think and report for him. Although these reports bore the signature of the collector, they were very soon judged to be the production of another hand. From this time Mr. Colebrooke rose into notice.

It was not long before he was nominated to an independent office connected with these duties. The event is thus announced to his family at home, in a letter from his brother.

"Graham has succeeded in getting Henry named on a deputation to investigate the resources of all Purneah, and increase the Company's revenue there. The Council was going to employ a commissioner, but Graham contended that while a man of Henry's abilities was head-assistant there, no other person should be employed. Henry is so pleased with the business, and so sanguine in his hopes, that he declares that he would not change situations with any man in the service." The great interest that he took in his labours, is evinced in one of his first letters after the appointment

or fancy, perhaps, ever formed before. The agitation of most people was very apparent, and Mrs. Sheridan was so overpowered that she fainted."

It may be right to mention that Burke enters into some details on the manner in which the Government and the Commission appointed to investigate Mr. Patterson's charges treated him, in order to show that he was an ill-used man.

took effect. "I am at present engaged," he writes, "in a work, for the success of which I feel all the solicitude of a young author. It is not a literary piece, or a work of science, but a ten years' settlement of some of the districts of this collectorship, in concluding which I have the honour to assist. You will at first think the solicitude I mention excessive; but you must consider that this settlement has always been considered as the principal object of the present government, for which three years have been spent in preparing."

This was written in December, 1789. In the July of the following year he writes in a very different tone.

"MY DEAR FATHER,

"I acknowledge the justice of the reproof conveyed in your letter of January last. The religion, manners, natural history, traditions, and arts of this country, may certainly furnish subjects on which my communications might perhaps be not uninteresting; but to offer anything deserving of attention would require a season of leisure to collect and digest information. Engaged in a public and busy scene, my mind is wholly engrossed by the cares and duties of my station, in vain I seek for relaxation-sake to direct my thoughts to other subjects, matters of business constantly recur. It is for this cause that I have occasionally apologised for a dearth of subjects, having no occurrences to relate, and the matters which occupy my attention being uninteresting as a subject of correspondence. If this was the case when I was an obscure individual, it is become more so since Government has ordered me on novel inquiries. When I first entered on the charge, feeling myself not unequal to the undertaking, my natural aversion to responsibility was silenced by the sanguine hope of distinguishing myself. It afterwards appeared that my instructions were erroneous, and they were, after several months, new-modelled. Disgusted with having laboured so long without its answering any purpose, my execution of their second orders will not be answerable, I doubt, to what is expected, and is somewhat slovenly. I shall be satisfied if I now obtain a tithe of the applause I first hoped for; and I am now determined never again to stand in a situation of responsibility, while I can have a subsistence without it." . . . . .

The spirit of this resolution did not cling to him long. Subsequent letters show ardent aspiration for still higher distinction;

and the feeling runs through most of his letters, until he was elevated to a post not far short in dignity to a seat in the Supreme Council; and then he was so well satisfied with his situation, as not to wish to rise higher. Much of his time at Purneah was employed in collecting information on the state of the Agriculture and internal Commerce of Bengal. He told the writer of these pages, that the materials for his treatise on these subjects were collected during his sporting excursions, and the constant intercourse with the peasantry which they gave rise to. But it is evident that the course of his thoughts was first turned in this direction by the nature of his official avocations, which involved inquiries concerning the statistics of the district. His letters show the strong taste that he had imbibed for statistical research. They are full of observations on the agriculture, and ingenious calculations concerning the population of his district, and of Bengal in general; but as they were afterwards embodied in "the Remarks," they will require no insertion here. The question of the colonization of India by Europeans, which it was one of the objects of his work to recommend and promote, had early engaged his attention, though the train of thought by which he was led to decide for the expedience of it, was quite unconnected with agriculture. He proposed it in order to give the civil servants a more permanent interest in the country, and check that disposition to regard India merely as a place for making fortunes, which characterised the "birds of passage" of those days.

The letter, of which the following is an extract, first broaches the scheme of becoming an author.

*"Purneah, 17 November, 1790.*

. . . . "I have frequently had it in my mind to attempt something on subjects relative to this country. The question is, on what to employ the pen. Translations are for those who rather need to fill their purses than gratify their ambition. For original compositions on Oriental history and sciences, is required more reading in the literature of the East than I possess, or am likely to attain. My subject should be connected with those matters to which my attention is professionally led.

"One subject is, I believe, yet untouched: the agriculture of Bengal. On this I have been curious of information, and having obtained some, I am now pursuing inquiries with some degree of regularity. I wish for your opinion, whether it would be worth while to reduce into form the information which may be obtained

on a subject necessarily dry, and which (curious perhaps) is certainly useless to English readers."

Here follows a detail of the objects of inquiry, comprising the whole course of Bengal husbandry, and interspersed with abundant notices regarding its condition. It appears to have been entered upon as an interesting study, and not with the ulterior object of inculcating any line of policy. The only plan that is discoverable in it, appears to have been to make it comparative between Europe and Asia, in order to enable the artisans and husbandmen of either country to profit by the knowledge. His reflections on husbandry and those on colonization were long kept distinct; they were not combined together until the tendency of the discussions, preparatory to the granting a new charter in 1793, provoked him to become an author. "I wrote the work," he told me, "in a fit of ill humour, at seeing the manner in which questions of Indian policy were dealt with."

The object of the work was to exhibit a body of information on the actual state of Bengal, in order to draw the public attention towards the value of the country, if governed on a liberal policy; and to point out its resources to all who might feel an interest in the question of European settlement. It was the joint production of himself and Mr. Anthony Lambert, and treated on the internal and external commerce of the country. The former part of the subject, and the chapters on agriculture (the greater portion of the volume), were written by Mr. Colebrooke.

It was a hazardous experiment, considering the despotic authority which the Company exercised over their servants. It was one of the first occasions on which free trade with India, and colonization of that country, were seriously proposed, and certainly a rare instance, at that time, of a Company's servant, and one in an inferior capacity, venturing to impugn the policy of their commercial restrictions. Soon after its publication, when he was naturally anxious to learn how it had been received, he made inquiries from an officer in high station, and received the rebuff, "You may think yourself fortunate if you remain in the service."

The work, however, was not published without due caution. For a time he hesitated, and it was not until he was much pressed by his friends, and had taken the opinion of all by whose judgment he could profit, that he consented to its appearance.

The publication of a private edition, in 1795, closed his labours for a time. It will be seen hereafter that he was compelled to



reprint the work in England, and that it was the cause of considerable anxiety to him through the course of the ten years following its first appearance ; but even before this first edition had appeared, his mind had been turned towards studies of a very different complexion and cast.

Before entering upon an account of those studies, I may mention another literary plan that he had in view at the time he was engaged on the work of which I have partly traced the history. He had thoughts of taking part in a controversy that then raged concerning the Land Revenue in Bengal. His official avocations led to this as to the former work. " I shall have occasion," he writes, " to enter fully into the whole system of the Revenue, as established by the native government which preceded us, and as altered by the British administration." This original intention was not prosecuted ; but the materials of this treatise formed the basis of a chapter (written in no controversial spirit), in " the Remarks."

It is natural to suppose that one so zealous of acquiring knowledge should have turned towards the literature of the country in which he resided at an early period of his residence in it. We have seen how constantly his father urged him to give up more of his time to inquiries concerning the literature and religion of the Hindús. " I have, indeed, at times turned my thoughts that way," Mr. Colebrooke replies on one occasion ; " but so many difficulties occur, as, joined to a want of leisure, may prove insuperable."—Occasionally, however, he finds time for research. Allusions to subjects of the nature required by his father are scattered over the letters written during the first ten years of his residence in India, every letter containing an apology for not sending more. He sometimes treats on the subject at considerable length, but his observations are cursory, and apparently picked up in a great measure in conversation with intelligent natives, and not from mere study. " Further than what I have given," he observes in one letter, " remains for those who study the religion ; as for myself I have been mostly taken up with public business, employing, as usual, my leisure in the sports of the field."

At length, in the eleventh year of his residence in India, he embarked on a course of study, which engaged the largest share of his attention, (public duties of course excepted,) until his return to Europe.

The original object for which he sought to acquire a knowledge of Sanscrit language had a reference to the treatises on Algebra, which he afterwards translated and gave to the world. However,

when he had mastered the language, his attention was diverted to other subjects, and that design was not executed until twenty years afterwards.

The difficulties that he encountered in his first attempts to acquire the language were such, that he had twice abandoned the study before he finally took it up, and succeeded. Unfortunately, no letter exists which alludes to these first attempts. It was not until he had been a full year engaged in this new pursuit, that we find him incidentally alluding to his progress. This much may be said, that he first entered upon this study while residing at Purneah, but that it was not until he was removed to Nattore, in the district of Rajshahi, that he engaged in it with ardour. He thus announces his arrival at that station.

*" September 29, 1793.*

" MY DEAR FATHER,

" A new arrangement in the revenue line has removed me from Purneah to Nattore, where I arrived in the middle of August. The collections of the districts dependant on this station become my charge. The judicial authority, from which the collections are now separated, is held by our friend, James Grant, who was lately collector at Bhaugulpore. They would persuade us that, in committing to us the most troublesome district of Bengal, a compliment is paid, for which we ought to be grateful. For my part, I would willingly have been spared the compliment, to be sent to an office of less responsibility and labour.

" This being one of the lowest countries of Bengal, I at present see it to great disadvantage. The whole country around is covered with a sheet of water, and we are insulated within the Court-yard. Here and there a village peeps above the level, and sends its peasants to gather their rice in boats; for in these low districts, rice, sown before the rains, rises with the inundation, and ripens in a very considerable depth of water. In some extensive tracts, a ship of the line might sail over the rice fields.

" On your question relating to the cultivation of sugar in Bengal, I may, I believe, refer you to papers, enclosed in a letter, addressed to you last season. If England will receive our sugar, and encourage the planters, we could furnish it cheaper than the West India islands, and supply more than the consumption of all Europe; at least, we could now undersell the West India planters in their own islands, and in a few years could increase the culture to any given quantity. But Mr. Dundas's propositions for the renewal of the Company's

charter are filled with clauses, whose obvious tendency is to check all enterprise and industry in this country.

"I shall send you, by the ships of the season, the volumes hitherto published, of Asiatic Researches. You will find in the third, a curious paper on Egypt, as known to the Hindús. They certainly have many traces of the early history of western countries. Their early authors recorded what came to their knowledge concerning celebrated persons; but they have not been careful to distinguish history from fable, nor to connect historical facts with geography or chronology.

"I have met with some legends that seem to have reference to the Jews, under the appellation of *Colábidúnsi* (abstaining from pork). Their war with Raja Súrata is referred to a former *Manwantara*, and, according to the Hindú chronology, one hundred and twenty millions of years of the present *Manwantara* are expired. This may help to show that no historical lights can be expected from Sanscrit literature; but it may nevertheless be curious, if not useful, to publish such of their legends as seem to resemble others known to European mythology. I shall send you some I have met with . . .

"H. T. C."

In the next letter he enters more fully on these topics. The first part I insert as giving his impressions on receiving information of the character of the East India Bill of 1793, and in corroboration of what has been already said of the spirit with which he wrote the treatise on husbandry and commerce.

"*Rajshahi, December 6, 1793.*

"MY DEAR FATHER,

"When I wrote last I had seen only vague accounts of the terms on which the charter was renewed. We here supposed that the former restrictions were in a great measure obsolete, and only continued *pro forma*, and that the real intention was to encourage a more liberal system of commercial intercourse between Great Britain and India, or, at least, to foster the new produce and commerce which had been opened.

"I hardly restrain myself from commenting at large on the system exhibited in the new act of parliament, and explained by the previous negotiations and debates. I conceive it contrary to justice and sound policy. It disappoints the sanguine expectations I had formed, of seeing this country revive under encouragements to its industry. It disappoints me of the satisfaction I hoped to receive,

from the reflection of having contributed my humble mite to the general good, in pointing out, or rather in suggesting hints for showing by what system of intercourse both nations might be equally benefited. The melancholy scene of increasing poverty in Bengal will not be shifted. But I am entering on the subject from which I had determined to refrain.

"In my Sanscrit studies I do not confine myself now to particular subjects, but skim the surface of all their sciences. I will subjoin for your amusement, some remarks on subjects treated in 'the Researches.' "

[Most of these remarks have since appeared more fully. The concluding observations, written as they are in the first keenness of his Oriental researches, give the general impressions which the result of his reading had left upon his mind.]

"Upon the whole, whatever may be the true antiquity of this nation, whether their mythology be a corruption of the pure deism we find in their books, or their deism a refinement from gross idolatry; whether their religious and moral precepts have been engrafted on the elegant philosophy of the Nyáya and Mimánsa, or this philosophy been refined on the plainer text of the Veda,—the Hindú is the most ancient nation of which we have valuable remains, and has been surpassed by none in refinement and civilization; though the utmost pitch of refinement to which it ever arrived preceded in time the dawn of civilization in any other nation of which we have even the name in history.

"The further our literary inquiries are extended here, the more vast and stupendous is the scene which opens to us; at the same time that the true and false, the sublime and the puerile, wisdom and absurdity, are so intermixed, that at every step we have to smile at folly, while we admire and acknowledge the philosophical truth, though couched in obscure allegory or puerile fable.

"I have only to wish for more leisure for diligent study in their literature: you might then expect more ample communications from me, and in a perspicuous arrangement.

"Your affectionate son,

"H. T. COLEBROOKE."

His father was anxious that he should treat on the subject discussed in the early part of the foregoing letter more at large, and with a view to publication. The letter subjoined was written in reply to a request of that nature, which had been suggested by observations of an earlier date than those last quoted.

*" Rajshahi, April 18, 1794.*

" MY DEAR FATHER,

" I had the satisfaction of receiving a letter from you, dated in September last. To make an attack upon the Company's charter must certainly offend; and if a liberal policy could be expected from an exclusive Company, I should think the attack best avoided. But the opinion declared by the Court of Directors, that no private trade should be permitted to interfere with their *Aurungs*, and their ungenerous conduct towards certain memorialists, who recommended encouragement to private traders, has betrayed an unconciliating temper, which never will acquiesce in any modification of their exclusive privileges.

" If it be admitted that Great Britain should draw a tribute from Bengal, and that it can only be drawn through the medium of commerce, conducted by a privileged Company, it is plausibly argued, that to maintain their commerce competition must be excluded. While it is assumed that the present fabric must be touched with caution and reverence, until the result of gradual experiment show another system preferable and practicable, the privileges maintained must defeat the proposed experiments, and the present system must be perpetuated in order to hold Bengal as a loose appendage on commerce, instead of connecting it to Great Britain as a portion of the empire. The caution which shrinks from discussing the policy of maintaining a privileged Company gives a great advantage to those who argue for a narrow system, professing to appeal to particular experience against general experience, which they are pleased to term theory. For by this caution they are permitted to proceed upon data which might be oppugned.

" If I were to presume so far as to enter on the discussion of any part of this subject, I would boldly enter on the whole. I think it might be shown that the Company lose by their Indian commerce; and that notwithstanding the tribute they draw, they lose by the connexion of the revenue with the commerce. If this can be shown, it follows that experience is against the expediency of the present system. Its justice might be next questioned. Having established the argument on justice and expediency, it might be allowable to speculate on the mutual benefit to Great Britain and Bengal, which would result from affiliating Bengal, and cherishing this country instead of oppressing her. The policy of free nations, in regard to foreign possessions, has ever been selfish. A sovereign prince may also be influenced by personal motives; but they do not necessarily lead him to partiality towards one class of his subjects,

or towards one portion of his empire. The advocates for Bengal must show to Great Britain advantage to herself, in the adoption of a more liberal policy: they must show to the Company disadvantage, in retaining their exclusive privileges.

"This might be done, for I think it will admit of demonstration, that the India Company would be bettered by relinquishing the revenue and commerce of the Peninsula, and by restricting themselves to the China monopoly; and that Great Britain would be benefited by a free commerce with British India.

"But the discussion of the subject would involve with these arguments, others in their nature offensive to the Directors, or to administration. Even those arguments might be resented, by a company jealous of their privileges. I do not think that an attack on those privileges should be avoided, lest resentment should refuse what may be expected from a spirit of conciliation; nor that it should be omitted as unseasonable after the exclusive privileges have been renewed. But I know it to be personally dangerous to discuss these topics; nor have I the presumption to think myself qualified to convince the public judgment.

"Since I last wrote, I communicated to the Asiatic Society a short paper on the ceremonies observed by Hindú women burning themselves with the corpse of their deceased husbands. I believe it will be printed in the next volume, for I have received from Sir William Jones a polite and flattering acknowledgment of it. I am now fairly entered among Oriental researches, and may, probably, unless I be early removed to an office of more labour, pursue Sanscrit inquiries diligently, and load the press with the result of my lucubrations.

"You need not apprehend that I should neglect business, or be thought to do so. My name for diligence in business is so far established, that a literary name will add to, rather than detract from official character. The only caution which occurs to me, is not to hazard anything in publication which would injure my reputation as a man of literature. This may be guarded against by submitting my manuscripts to private perusal.

"Your affectionate son,

"H. T. COLEBROOKE."

The paper on the burning of Hindú widows comprised a collection of the Hindú authorities bearing on the subject: it was the first of his contributions to the *Asiatic Researches*, and the translation was undertaken by him "as a task," while as yet studying the language,

thereby making his exercises available to science. The correspondence of which the letter from Sir William Jones was the opening, was suddenly terminated by the death of that eminent scholar. Mr. Colebrooke thus speaks of the melancholy event, in a letter written in June, 1794.

“ Since I wrote to you, the world has sustained an irreparable loss, in the death of Sir William Jones. As a judge, as a constitutional lawyer, and for his amiable qualities in private life, he must have been lost with heartfelt regret. But his loss as a literary character will be felt in a wider circle. It was his intention shortly to have returned to Europe, where the most valuable works might have been expected from his pen. His premature death leaves the result of his researches unarranged, and must lose to the world much that was only committed to memory, and much of which the notes must be unintelligible to those into whose hands his papers fall. It must be long before he is replaced in the same career of literature, if he ever is so. None of those who are now engaged in Oriental researches are so fully informed in the classical languages of the East; and I fear that in the progress of their inquiries none will be found to have such comprehensive views.”

The death of Sir William Jones gave rise in Mr. Colebrooke to an undertaking which diverted his studies from the desultory course which the first eagerness of his researches led his mind to pursue. It is described in the following extract of a letter, written in October, 1794.

“ The laborious undertaking to which I allude, is a translation from the original Sanscrit, of a copious digest of Hindú law; which was compiled under the directions of Sir W. Jones. Unfortunately for the public, he did not live to finish it. Knowing that few possess the language, and thence judging that it might be difficult to find a person to complete the work, I offered my services; but some difficulties were at first made, which I misconstrued, and therefore retracted my offer. I supposed that where terms were insisted on to which I could not agree, there could be no difficulty in finding another person willing and able to make the translation; and my only motive for undertaking it consequently ceased; for I had explained my motive to be, that the work might not be lost, and had refused all emolument from it.

“ However, on a late visit to Calcutta, I found that I had misunderstood the intentions of our great men, and that unless I made the translation, it could not be immediately done; for one had refused it, and the studies of others in the language were yet young. But

still it was insisted with me, that I should reside in Calcutta during the work, give up my present station, and accept of a salary for the translation. To this I could not accede; but to remove the petty difficulties which were made, I offered to carry it on at my leisure, either to its completion, or until some person were found willing to dedicate his *whole time* to it. This was accepted, and I have been for this month past busied in the translation. It will be a voluminous work, nevertheless I expect to finish it in six months.

"The additional expense to which I am put for pundits and amanuenses will not be considerable, as far as I can at present judge. Unless it exceed two thousand rupees, I shall choose to bear the expense myself; otherwise I shall obtain reimbursement when the translation is finished."

He greatly miscalculated the extent of labour required; instead of six months it occupied him two years. This, however, was partly owing to his having changed his plan, as will be seen presently.

The nature of the work called for unremitting labour, even drudgery; but there was, perhaps, no undertaking in which he engaged with more zeal. I am told by his brother, who lived for some months in his house at Rajshahi, where he first commenced the work, that the intenseness of his application was such as to alarm his friends for his health; and that it was their practice to plan various sporting excursions in order to withdraw his mind from his labours. He was then, too, a midnight student, which his companions at the station did their best to prevent, by breaking in upon his retirement and putting out the lights.

He had not been long engaged in the translation of the Digest, before he was removed to an office that afforded more leisure for study than the one which he had held at Rajshahi. The new office was of a judicial nature, and placed him in a neighbourhood which he had for some time been anxious to visit. The event is announced in the following letter.

*"Rajshahi, August 11, 1795.*

"MY DEAR FATHER,

"It will afford you pleasure to learn that I have been appointed to an eligible post, the Adawlut at Mirzapoor. From its neighbourhood to Benares, I shall have the convenience for which I wished to be placed at that city,—ready access to the Hindú College. On one account I may prefer it as a retired situation; and I understand it is both wholesome and pleasant.

"My pursuits in Sanscrit, in which I am confident you equally interest yourself for my success, proceed well. The great work I



undertook a year ago, is well advanced; it will employ the leisure of another year, which exceeds my estimate; but my first intention had been to omit or abridge the commentaries of the lawyers. I afterwards determined on carrying the verbal translation through the whole, both text and gloss; and I shall take advice on the translation, whether to abridge the subject while revising it. Either way it will be no slight performance, but fill a ponderous folio or two.

"On a very different subject, I have printed a private edition of a moderate quarto<sup>1</sup>; the subject is the same which I once wrote you I should avoid. But I could not refrain from committing my thoughts to paper, and was persuaded to make a private edition of the work; it has been shown to friends on whose judgment I rely, and who would advise me against anything which might be dangerous to me.

"I enclose a list of books and instruments which I should be happy to receive with those requested in my last. I have thoughts of employing my leisure on chemical experiments, while correcting the work now in hand for the press. Were another work undertaken, it might render me too careless in this irksome task.

"The following short enumeration of the opinions of the different Hindú sects on the nature of the Deity fell in my way very lately; to explain them might form a good metaphysical essay:

"He, whoever he be, whom men adore for human purposes, (for prosperity, life, final beatitude, &c.) is, according to the *Aupanishadas* (who ground their opinions on the hymns extracted from the Veda), 'he whose nature is pure and silent.'

"According to the *Cáphilas* (followers of *CAPILA*, the founder of a sect in philosophy,) 'the first, wise, and perfect being.'

"According to the *Pátanjálas*, (named from the founder of the sect,) 'the benevolent revealer of all things.'

"According to the *Pásupatas*, (a religious sect,) 'he who is, in contradistinction to the world and the *Védas*, unstained and independent.'

"According to the *Saivas*, (or peculiar worshippers of *SIVA*), 'Siva the destroyer.'

"According to the *Vaishnavas*, (or peculiar worshippers of *VISHNU* the preserver,) 'the great male.'

"According to the *Pauránicas*, (who ground their opinions on mythological story,) 'the common ancestor.'

"According to the *Yájnyicas*, (who attribute all merit to sacrifice,) 'the male, or object of adoration and sacrifice.'

<sup>1</sup> The Remarks on the Husbandry and Commerce of Bengal.

“ According to the *Saugatas*, (followers of JINA and BUDDHA,) ‘ the omniscient.’

“ According to the *Digambaras*, (a sect of naked devotees,) ‘ the unclothed being.’

“ According to the *Mimāṃsikas*, (named from the name of this sect of philosophers or logicians,) ‘ he for whom religious rites are ordained,’ that is, the object of adoration and religious observances.

“ According to the *Chāroḍakas*, ‘ he who is acknowledged by the universal consent of mankind.’

“ According to the *Naiyayikas*, (Logicians,) ‘ the universal agent, or active being.’

“ Not to mention many other opinions, the tribes of Artisans hold him to be the deity whom they worship by the name of VISWACARMAN, that is, they do not define the value of the divinity.

“ This extract must suffice for the present.

“ Your affectionate son,

“ H. T. COLEBROOKE.”

Shortly after his arrival at his new station, he writes in a high tone of satisfaction.

“ Mirzapore, October 12, 1795.

“ I have already hinted that I am much pleased with this situation. It is in a very beautiful country, and possesses an advantage not frequent in these provinces, nearness to a hilly country. Another circumstance which renders this place a pleasant residence, is the thriving state of the town and neighbourhood. Mirzapore has, within few years, become one of the principal marts for land trade, and its commerce is daily increasing. From its further increase I may derive honour, as well as the simple pleasure of witnessing it; for its prosperity would be partly attributed to my exertions in the care of the police, &c.

“ To join great with small, would that peace were restored, and England as thriving as this town! The last accounts which have reached us, exhibit very different prospects; an obstinate perseverance in a disastrous war, and dangerous discontents in Ireland. But it is of no avail to employ my thoughts on public ills; it shall be enough for me if my near friends are well and happy.”

The following observations took their rise in some apologies for the irregularity of his correspondence.

“ To those who have believed accounts formerly published, of the indolent lives led by the British in India, my hint of urgent business

would need to be supported; but I might affirm, on the contrary, that public servants are more constantly employed in official duties than elsewhere. Even Sunday is no holiday to us. You will easily admit it, when I add that in the judicial department, a single magistrate must hear and determine from three hundred to five hundred causes a month; in some districts twice as much; and that he must not only record his proceedings at large, with all the pleadings, evidence, &c., in writing, but also furnish monthly reports of every cause decided, monthly accounts of all moneys passing through the court; and must also correspond, on the business of the police, &c., with the native magistrates under him, with the magistrates of other districts, and with government, besides an ample etcetera for incidental business.

"You may wonder how any person finds leisure for literary pursuits. It is indeed, a matter of surprise; and our late worthy president of the Asiatic Society has somewhere remarked upon it. *Appropos*, You ask how we are to supply his place? Indeed, but ill! Our present and future presidents may preside with dignity and propriety, but who can supply his place in diligent and ingenious researches? Not even the combined efforts of the whole Society! It was lately hinted to me, that they looked to Mr. Davis, Mr. Wilford, and myself, for the materials of another volume. Now, Mr. Davis has not a day to give to Sanscrit avocations in three years. All my leisure is employed on three ponderous quartos of Hindú Jurisprudence. The whole load, therefore, falls on one."

While engaged on this work, he was still laying down further plans of literary study. In June, 1796, he writes as follows.

"I need books on a subject with which I am so little acquainted, that I cannot name the particular books, which would answer my purpose. I am inclined to believe that much similarity might be traced between the Sanscrit language and the Celtic tongue, and between the Hindú antiquities and the Runic and Celtic antiquities. Several coincidences have been pointed out to me by gentlemen acquainted with Erse; and in the little I have picked up concerning Celtic antiquities, some points of similarity have occurred to me, especially in respect of religion. I am, for this reason, anxious to possess some of the principal works on the Gothic, old Saxon, and Erse, or Irish languages, and on Celtic and Runic antiquities. Under this general designation, could a bookseller provide such books as will answer my purpose?"

On the 3d of January, 1797, after about two years of incessant application, he announces the completion of his great undertaking.

"The task of translating the digest of Indian law, on which I have been so long employed, is now completed; last week I sent it to the Governor General. It has been attended with expense so much exceeding what I had expected, that this circumstance, joined to some other considerations, has determined me to accept remuneration, if adequately offered; I have intimated as much. Motives of pride, which had their share in dictating the former resolution, must yield to stronger calls, and the labour has much exceeded what I intended to have given gratuitously. I shall probably visit Calcutta this month, to arrange the mode of putting the work into the press. Then will follow the anxieties of an author, painfully solicitous for the suffrage of the public. I have, indeed, less to fear than most authors. I am not responsible for the matter or arrangement, and elegance of style is not required in works of this nature. Fidelity of translation is all which is called for; and on this point I fear not reprehension. I hope my literary bantling will be presented to you next year."

The letter from which the above is taken, proceeds to deal with political events; still, however, his thoughts revert to Sanscrit, and he concludes with some observations on the prospects of that literature.

"I turn," he writes, "to the more pleasing topic of literature and improvement. Types have been lately cast in Calcutta, for printing the Sanscrit language in its appropriate character. This will be early followed by the publication of a dictionary of that language, which a friend of mine is preparing for the press; and this again may be accompanied by a grammar which I have some intention of giving to the public. When these helps to the study of Sanscrit have issued from the press, it is possible that it may be taken up at our universities in England, as Arabic is now studied there. Our collegians have more leisure for such undertakings, than any residents in India, who have little leisure from official avocations for literary researches. However, the spirit of research is not dead.

"The Asiatic Society have applied for an incorporation. This, it is thought, will give permanence to the Society, and by adding to its dignity, stimulate the members of it to support its fame. Yet, I fear, on the whole, that the expectation formed in Europe from the literary mine now opened here, will be in a great degree disappointed. Curiosity will, indeed, be gratified, and some addition made to the history of philosophy, &c., but on most subjects, less

information will be obtained than is looked for. Yet this shall not damp the ardour of inquiry in

“ Your affectionate son,

“ H. T. COLEBROOKE.”

He returns again to the subject of the Digest, in a letter written during a short visit which he paid to Calcutta.

“ *February 3, 1797.*

“ MY DEAR FATHER,

“ I came down to Calcutta a few days ago, for the purpose of seeing my translation put into the press in a satisfactory shape, and am now busied in concerting the best dress to let it appear in.

“ The Governor General presented it to the council, with a minute, containing many expressions very flattering to me. As I derive no emolument from these labours, thanks may be the more easily obtained, and at some future period it may be useful to have received thanks.

“ I will now ask your permission to open to you views of ambition to which I have been gradually led, and which it would have been presumptuous to unfold earlier. In doing it, I must betray some self conceit which I would not betray to any one but my indulgent father. You will gather from the enclosed minute, from the occasional thanks I receive in the progress of my official duties, and perhaps from channels not known to me, that I stand high in esteem, both with the members of government and with the public at large. While earning a reputation in so many and various lines, I have not hitherto sought to avail myself of it, but contented myself with gradual advancement, which has been afforded me unsolicited. This plan of forbearance, in which I was, perhaps, guided as much by inclination as by prudence, is now nearly arrived at its maturity; and endeavours may be used, not altogether hopelessly, to push me into the supreme council. I need your advice, and shall request your aid in pursuing the scheme. If you advert to the few rivals I have in the service, who can have any pretensions to look to a seat in council, and if you reflect on various other circumstances which will readily occur, the idea will no longer seem wild to you.

“ You will now perceive, what I was before ashamed to explain, the reason why I wished you not to press Lord Cornwallis concerning me. I was confident of being able to raise myself without exertions to any of the common offices of the service, and I yet

expect to be able, without more help than my personal interest here, to rise yet higher in the same course of office. I therefore wished to retain Lord Cornwallis' good will, that I might have his good word, should his advice be asked, if ever it be agitated to name me for council.

"When the Digest is printed off, you will perceive the most material difference between this and Halhed's, for Halhed's is no translation of the Sanscrit original, and, as Sir William Jones remarked, it is full of gross and dangerous errors. The means of acquiring the Sanscrit language were, by translating a grammar and several dictionaries of it, with the help of a Brahman. I cannot conceive how it came to be ever asserted that the Brahmans were averse to instruct strangers; several gentlemen who have studied the language, find, as I do, the greatest readiness in them to give us access to all their sciences. They do not even conceal from us the most sacred texts of their *Védas*.

"Your affectionate son,

"H. T. COLEBROOKE."

Most of the readers of this memoir will be aware that the Digest of Hindú law translated by Mr. Colebrooke, was not the first that the British rule had given rise to. The work, to which allusion is made in the preceding letter, was compiled during the administration of Mr. Hastings, and underwent a double process of interpretation; first, from the original Sanscrit into Persian, and thence into English by Mr. Halhed. A work thus composed could not, of course, be depended upon for those purposes for which it was originally intended, viz., as a check upon the interpretations of the native pundits, and it was, moreover, essentially defective on the important branch of "contracts." For these and some other reasons, Sir William Jones proposed that the more elaborate work should be undertaken, which was accordingly done. Voluminous as this new compilation was, it was defective on some points, such as criminal law; and on others, it was characterized by the translator in almost the same terms as those which had formerly been applied by Sir William Jones to the work of Mr. Halhed; "extremely diffusive on subjects rather curious than useful." These defects in the original plan, Mr. Colebrooke sought to amend by means of a supplementary Digest, which should comprise those heads on which the other was deficient. He proposed to employ efficient pundits in the compilation, while the task of translation should engage himself. It will be seen that it occupied no slight

portion of his leisure for several years following. The pundit employed proved dilatory or unequal to the task ; the whole burden, therefore, fell upon himself.

This task, and Sanscrit studies of a miscellaneous nature, now engaged his attention. During the four years subsequent to the completion of the Digest, his contributions to the Asiatic Researches were more frequent than at any other time.

I extract the following request for books, from a letter written soon after the completion of the Digest, which exhibits the varied and extensive course of his general reading.

" I shall be glad to have Dr. Bancroft's Treatise on Dyeing. If a telescope has not yet been sent I should wish for one ; it will complete a very good apparatus I have got. The editions of Linnæus, which your bookseller sent three years ago, are very old and of little use ; more than three hundred genera of plants have been since discovered. May I beg you to order the latest editions of the Philosophia Botanica, Genera and Species Plantarum, and Kerr's edition of the Systema Naturæ. I should like to have the latest editions of Lavoisier's Works. I had marked Berthollet on Dyeing to ask you for it, but I suppose Dr. Bancroft's Treatise may contain the whole of Berthollet's doctrine. Hutton's Mathematical Dictionary and Kerr's Chemical Dictionary are recommended to me. These I should be glad to have, with as many volumes as have been published of Memoirs of Science and Arts ; also, Valli and Munroe on Animal Electricity, Mackay on the Longitude, and Crawford's Works on Heat. If you approve Andrews' History of Great Britain, order it to be added ; also, Kippis' Biographia Britannica, if it is completed. Paley's Evidences of Christianity is much praised by reviewers. It has not been brought to India."

In 1799, Mr. Colebrooke was promoted to a new sphere of official employ. This is announced to his relations in England in the letter here subjoined.

*" Nagpoor, 8 June, 1799.*

" MY DEAR MOTHER,

" In the hurry of preparing for a long journey from Calcutta to the capital of Berar, and, afterwards, during the journey itself, I omitted writing to you. I will now make atonement by giving you some account of myself for a year past.

" About this time twelvemonth, I was nominated to proceed on an embassy to Nagpoor ; and in the month of August, while I was busy preparing for the journey, I had orders to repair to Calcutta. Thither I went by water, and had the pleasure of seeing my brother

in passing Moorshedabad. After some stay at Calcutta, which was rather irksome from the daily expectation of leaving it, and the tedious postponement of my departure, I travelled post to Benares ; and there and at Mirzapoor I completed my preparations. At length, on the 4th January, I set out from Mirzapoor. My route lay through a very difficult country, part of which had never been visited by Europeans. It was mostly mountainous ; covered with forest, and very thinly inhabited. The roads were bad ; and many of the passes over the mountains very dangerous, and scarcely practicable. The journey was tedious. However, I completed it in two months and a half, with the loss of a few camels, and of much patience.

“The picturesque scenery of hill and wood was interesting for a few days. Something there was to attract attention in almost every part of the route ; but, still, the daily march and daily want of occupation palled on the mental appetite. I had been long tired of the journey, especially as great heat had succeeded to intense cold, when I reached the place of my destination on the 18th March. With the exception of some vacant intervals, I have been since fully employed in my public functions ; but I now embrace the opportunity of such leisure as my duties leave me to make amends for former indolence. Yet, not having sufficient time to give all particulars, I will refer you to my sister for passages from a sort of journal I shall send her ; and I will here content myself with giving you some idea of the place where I am now sojourning.

“The town of Nagpoor is situated in a valley, surrounded by barren hills of no great elevation. They are barren for want of soil. The valley is so from too great a prevalence of clay. It is true that in the hot season, most places in India have a dreary appearance, I will not therefore pass sentence against this, but only say that hitherto its aspect has not been cheerful, and that a clayey country is not promising for the rainy season. The roads being bad and commanding no beautiful prospects, there is little temptation for daily exercise ; and my turn for sporting is here, as it has been at Mirzapoor, useless to me, for there is no sporting ground within reach.

“I should have told you that the town stands upon the *Nág*, a small brook which only deserves to be noticed, because it appears to give name to the province. The town is, like most towns in India, ill-built, with narrow dirty streets. But the ground surrounding the palace is more open, and the palace itself is a large and (for a



Hindu owner) a magnificent building. It consists of half a dozen courts, completely surrounded with buildings two or three stories high, lined internally with a narrow colonnade, and having a dead wall outside. I have only seen the public apartments. They are spacious, particularly the principal hall of audience, and are well decorated with pier-glasses, pictures, girandoles, &c. The reigning prince has not only a taste for architecture, which he has displayed in the palace he has built for himself, but he has also a turn for gardening. I benefit by it, for I have got for my abode a neat garden, with a tolerable good house in it. The garden is laid out in straight walks with cut hedges, &c. But I have been long enough absent from England not to be fastidious about the laying out of grounds.

“ Adjoining to mine is a similar house and garden, belonging to the heir apparent. A little further is a very pretty one, lately finished by the reigning prince himself. It is small, but pretty, and the numerous buildings and their splendid decorations are elegant. The effect is particularly pleasing at night, when the fountains play, and the whole garden is illuminated. In a hot climate, and more especially in the hot season, the night is the only time when a garden can be visited.

“ Of the Court, I may well say that the Raja is in his manners more like a private gentleman than a sovereign prince, and an Asiatic one too. His manners are simple, with little pomp, and less appearance of pride. The courtiers naturally copy their sovereign, and live more like friends than servants with him. Yet the Court is not devoid of splendour and dignity. I have seen in it a numerous assembly of nobles sitting at a respectful distance along the walls of a magnificent apartment, while the select few surrounded the Raja's throne, and sometimes conversed, but oftener listened to the singing of dancing women.

“ This part of the Raja's magnificence is what he seems most attached to, next to the diversion of tiger-hunting. All day and all night, the exhibition of music and dancing is continued, and so attached are the people of the place to that amusement, that even while taking the diversion of fishing they have a set of singers embarked with them in each boat. Of his fondness for tiger-hunting, I can give you no better proof than his quitting affairs of state for ten days together to go in pursuit of tigers. At this moment he is absent on such an excursion; in the course of which he killed four tigers in one day.

" Here let me close, for the present, a subject which may be resumed at some future occasion.

" Your affectionate son,

" H. T. COLEBROOKE."

The journal of his journey to Nagpoor, alluded to in the preceding letter, together with one of his homeward routes, was published in the Asiatic Annual Register for 1806. Another journal was kept at broken intervals, during his residence at Nagpoor, but it has never been published. It is too bulky to bear insertion here; and the events narrated throw but little light on the pursuits and mode of life of the writer. It may, however, be interesting to remark upon the large portion which is devoted to a description of the Hindú festivals. One might pass over pages without its appearing to be anything but a record of such events.

I shall insert, however, passages of letters written at Nagpoor, which serve to carry on and illustrate, the history of his public life and private studies.

" . . . . . Apropos of the causes of promotion, I must have ill described what Lord Wellesley said to me by way of compliment. I certainly did not understand from it that he had selected me 'for my abilities *merely*.' On the contrary, it was from his compliment, that I first learned that I had been strongly recommended to him. What I understood was, that he meant to impress me with the notion that my appointment was partly due to recommendation, which would not, however, have been sufficient, had it not been confirmed by the character he found I bore in the country.

" You have probably heard that our Governor-General has established a College for Oriental Literature in Calcutta, and intends to establish a new Court of Appeal. It is reported that I am to be nominated a member of the new court, and a *professor* in the new college. Should this happen I shall be fixed at Calcutta, which is exactly what I now wish for.

" . . . . . The drawings Mary told you of were a collection of drawings of birds, which remained unfinished because the painter had died; and I could not find another to fill up my original design of adding a botanical figure, with insects or fish, to each drawing. I have since given up that branch of natural history, and devoted myself to observe the vegetable kingdom only. I shall probably publish, on that subject, some time next year. It is by far the most

pleasing branch of natural history. My chief disgust to Ornithology, arises from feeling the cruelty of keeping birds pining for several days, while a draftsman is making a drawing of them. I hope to send a more numerous collection next winter.

" . . . . My agent at Calcutta has very properly stopped the parcel containing a revised copy of *Remarks on the Agriculture, &c., of Bengal*, upon hearing that my friend, Mr. Lambert, is deceased. You must determine whether the work shall be published or suppressed. If there be real danger of a piratical publication, there is no choice; if not, the suppression will not be disagreeable to me. I do not seek fame from it, since my literary reputation will, I hope, be sufficiently established by my labours as an Orientalist. Whether or no the work would be palatable to Ministers and the Directors, it would certainly rouse a nest of hornets, by whom I may be stung. To gratify poor Lambert, I was willing to risk something. I must now chiefly consult my own peace.

" Lord Teignmouth gave you a very true account of the transactions relative to my undertaking the translation of the *Digest*. What Mr. Harrington told him, was nearly what I desired him to say. My pride was touched by the suggestion, that it would be expedient to devote myself solely to the work. I then refused any salary upon any conditions. It must always be remembered, also, that Lord Teignmouth was chiefly induced by those very circumstances to send me to Mirzapoor. I have been as much rewarded, and as much patronised, as I could expect or wish. Should you have any future opportunity, let me beg you to mention to Lord T. that I am grateful and contented.

" I find that I neglected to mention, that I had relinquished all intention of deriving any pecuniary benefit from the republication of the book. I abandoned all thoughts of that, as long ago as when the Government granted me a monthly allowance to remunerate past and future labours. In the Supplement now compiling, the criminal law is included; but it is not the chief subject, and will be much abridged, because it is of little use, since the Mussulman law supersedes it in practice. The chief topics are, the rules of special pleading and the law of evidence; both very important titles. Criminal law and ordeal, and the constitution of courts of justice, are curious, and not wholly useless, but much less important.

" This supplement advances slowly. The venerable old pundit employed by me at Benares, has supplied me with so little text that I have set about the compilation myself from the books I brought

with me. Notwithstanding my impatience, I still see the conclusion of it at a great distance, so many avocations prevent the regular prosecution of the work."

In a letter, written in January, 1801, and but few months later than the preceding, he mentions that his compilation and translation advance well. "Having prepared the materials, I am now putting them in order, and shall have made great progress, I hope, towards the close of the year. I mean, also, to furnish three or four essays to the Asiatic Society this year. One (in continuation of the subject of religious ceremonies), on marriages; it is so nearly completed as to require but one sitting more. Another on Sanscrit Prosody, which I am not, however, fully resolved on publishing. A third on the Indian Theogonies; and one on the *Védas* cannot, I fear, be completed until I get back to my library. A critical treatise on Indian plants is greatly advanced too; and I have several other little works on the anvil, enough to supply the Asiatic Researches with a couple of essays in each volume for several years to come. I am sure you interest yourself in my literary pursuits; and I therefore make no apology for troubling you with this detail."

This was his last letter from Nagpoor, but his next he writes from

"Benares, July 20, 1801.

"MY DEAR FATHER,

"As ships are despatched from Calcutta almost every week, you will probably have received some intimation that may take away surprise at the date of this letter. I left Nagpoor two months ago; and, making forced marches the whole way, reached Mirzapoor in little more than a month. It was fortunate that I made the utmost expedition, for on the same evening that I reached Mirzapoor the rains set in with great violence. Had they caught me on the way, it would have been impracticable to proceed with so many people and cattle; and the camp would have been soon invaded by disease, common in hilly countries that are covered with forest.

"On my arrival at Mirzapoor I wrote down for orders, and after staying a week, came here to await instructions. As the Governor-General intends making a progress through these provinces next month, he has commanded me to wait for him here. I am availing myself of this interval of leisure to arrange for the press a good part of my own compilation of Hindú law. It is a most laborious work,

which has employed years of hard application, and will require a vast deal more labour for its completion.

"I have not yet the least hint what are the Governor-General's intentions regarding me. He has recorded his approbation of my conduct in terms very flattering, and my friends all suppose he intends to promote me. I do not, however, see at present any opening for it.

"While expecting his Excellency here, I have a good opportunity, which I do not let slip, of adding to my collection of manuscripts, and for conversing with learned pundits on the subject of them. I have lately picked up Commentaries on two of the Védas, and shall be able, with this help, to complete, for the eighth volume of Asiatic Researches, a treatise on the subject. The seventh volume, which is now in the press, will contain three essays of mine; two on religious ceremonies, and one on Indian languages. Possibly I may yet furnish a fourth.

"As a man who travels into foreign countries should not return empty handed, I have brought some curiosities, which I have thoughts of presenting to the Governor-General. There are some specimens of adamantine spar, and, what would come well from me, agates and other stones that are employed by the Hindús in their worship as types of the chief deities. I have added a complete assortment of the vessels used by Hindús in the worship of these pocket idols, if I may so call them. I shall reserve one set of these idols to be sent to you as specimens of Indian absurdity. In the mean time it may be sufficient to mention, that a small oval agate represents Mahádeo, or the god of destruction and reproduction; a globular cornelian, Ganés, the god of science and surmounter of obstacles; a crystal taw, the sun; a metallic one, Déví, the goddess of destruction; and the Sálgrám stone, Vishnu, the preserver and soul of the universe. These are the only gods really worshipped by the Hindús, by some severally, by others conjointly. Such as worship all five, place their types in the manner of a quincunx, giving the central place to that deity whom the person happens to hold in the greatest reverence.

"Your affectionate son,

"H. T. COLEBROOKE."

The preceding letter had not been long written, when he was appointed to the high office which rumour had already assigned to him. A High Court of Appeal was established in Calcutta (the present Sudder Dewany and Nizamut Adawlut), and Mr. Colebrooke was at once placed at the head. At the same time he received the

appointment of Sanscrit professor to the college for the education of the civil servants, then first established in Calcutta. The office was honorary in its nature, as he derived no emolument from it, and delivered no oral instruction; but the circumstance of his connexion with the college led to the compilation of his Sanscrit Grammar. He had, we have seen, occasionally entertained thoughts of publishing a work of that nature, and he now entered upon the task under a feeling of duty. In this spirit he wrote to his father shortly after his arrival at Calcutta.

*" Calcutta, October 16.*

" My chief literary occupation now is a Sanscrit Grammar. I undertook it because I accepted the professorship of Sanscrit in the college; and I am expediting the publication, that this may be one of the valuable legacies of the college, if it should die the death to which the Court of Directors have condemned it.

" This institution has already given occasion to many valuable publications on the Oriental languages and literature, and the proficiency of many of the students is truly astonishing. It has been well remarked, that it has called forth greater exertion of intellect in a shorter period than was ever before witnessed in a similar walk of science. In comparing this with other places for instruction for the Company's servants, it should be always observed, that if the institution be attended with some expense, yet the gratuitous assistance also of eminent men is obtained, assistance which cannot be purchased, nor could be obtained in an institution of less dignity."

The first volume of the Sanscrit Grammar was completed and published in 1805; but in consequence of the appearance of two other Grammars of the same language, one by Dr. Carey, and another by Dr. (afterwards Sir Charles) Wilkins, the further prosecution of the work was abandoned.

The extract here subjoined serves to carry on his literary history during the first two years of his residence in Calcutta.

*" October 5, 1803.*

" MY DEAR FATHER,

" I have just had the pleasure of receiving a letter from you, dated 10th April. The *Flora Indica*, which I had mentioned, and concerning which you inquire, is at a stand, so far as my share of the undertaking goes. The botanical part, which falls to Dr. Roxburgh's share, is in great forwardness. No engravings are intended, as these, with fuller descriptions, are in course of publi-

cation at home. My share of the design is the insertion of Oriental Synonyma, with criticisms on them. But I have not had time to work upon that subject for more than a twelvemonth past. For the same reason my narrative of the journey to Nagpoor remains unfinished, and no essays have been completed for the next volume of Asiatic Researches. The Sanscrit Grammar, and the compilation of Law, both of which are matter of duty, advance but slowly. In short, continued labour, from morning until sunset, is insufficient for official duties; yet I am forced by circumstances, which I shall shortly advert to, by and by, to take upon myself the immediate task of editing the work which I have so long kept back. . . ."

The circumstances are detailed in a subsequent part of the letter. Extracts from the Treatise on Husbandry and Commerce had been printed in the Asiatic Annual Register, for 1802, and as the feelings under which it had been written were softened and altered by time, he deemed that he could not better show that the publication of those extracts was unauthorized, and not to be taken as evidence of the opinions he then held, than by printing an edition himself; this was accordingly done, and the treatise, as it appeared in England, contained only that portion which was the work of his pen, while the general tone of the work was considerably changed.

It is curious to observe him about this time, inclining again to treat on a subject of a political nature. The train of thought which leads to the expression of this desire is here given.

"The arrangements which have been made for the Indian shipping and private trade have been published here; they are not at all satisfactory. The points, which are essential, and which the Directors have so essentially resisted, must be obtained, and others of no less importance must be also carried against the Directors. British India, a greater empire than any Emperor of Delhi reigned over, must not be governed on the narrow principles of commercial monopoly. It is in the commerce of India, that England must find the increasing opulence which may enable it to sustain another war against the gigantic powers of the French empire, and it should be only governed in the mode that will most strengthen Great Britain. I feel much inclination to prepare a small tract on the topics that this view of the nature has suggested to me, but I apprehend that the inclination must not be indulged at present."<sup>1</sup>

Another extract carries on the history of his literary plans and studies, to the year 1805.

<sup>1</sup> It was never indulged.

" . . . . I have nearly completed for the Asiatic Researches a treatise on the *Védas*. It had been my intention to let the eighth volume be published without any contribution of mine ; but particular circumstances have induced me to finish a paper or two for the present volume, though compelled to suspend the progress of other works which I was anxious to bring to a close. Among others, the corrected edition of the Treatise on Husbandry suffers by the interruption.

" I have lately obtained a considerable addition of authentic and important information on the religion and mythology of the Buddhists. Everything relative to a religion, which has spread even more widely than the Christian or the Mahommedan faiths, is particularly interesting. I shall employ the first moment of leisure I can spare to publish this curious information, which will elucidate the accounts before obtained in China, Japan, Siam, Pegu, Ceylon, and Tibet. Captain Wilford, whose writings in the Asiatic Researches are known to you, has also prosecuted the same subject with considerable success ; and will soon publish his lucubrations on that and on the long-expected theme of the British Isles as known to the Hindús. You will find in his treatises on those subjects very curious matter, but very little conviction."

The letter which follows was written in the same year as the foregoing. The subject with which it opens had given Mr. Colebrooke's family some annoyance, as the act there adverted to seemed to them to be an attempt to deprive him of the honour of translating the Digest of Hindú Law.

" MY DEAR FATHER,

" I have seen in the newspaper an account of the monument, which Lady Jones has caused to be erected for her late husband. That account would certainly seem to imply that Sir William compiled and translated *the Digest*. I should suppose, however, that the design of the monument regards the translation of Menu. Lady Jones would surely not choose for the subject of the monument what cannot be claimed for him, when so many indisputable subjects presented themselves. By the by, the compilation of the Digest does no credit to the compiler, for the arrangement is not good. As for the other point you mention, the use of a translation by Wilkins without acknowledgment, I can bear testimony that Sir William Jones's own labours in Menu sufficed without the aid of a translation. He had carried an interlineary Latin



version through all the difficult chapters ; he had read the original three times through, and he had carefully studied the commentaries. This I know, because it appears clearly so from the copies of Menu and his commentators which Sir William used, and which I have seen. I must think that he paid a sufficient compliment to Wilkins, when he said, that without his aid he should never have learned Sanscrit (Preface to *Sacotala*). I observe with regret a growing disposition, here and in England, to depreciate Sir William Jones's merits. It has not hitherto shown itself beyond private circles and conversation. Should the same disposition be manifested in print, I shall think myself bound to bear public testimony to his attainments in Sanscrit . . . ."

There are but few letters in my possession of a date later than the preceding, none of a kind to form the basis of a biographical sketch. It was to his father that he detailed the progress of his literary labours ; and though many letters were doubtless written between 1805 and 1809, in which latter year his father died, yet none are extant. The narrative of his life will therefore proceed with more rapidity.

It has already been remarked, that up to the time of his appointment to the high office which removed him to Calcutta, his letters bear frequent testimony to the hopes which he entertained of being elevated to a seat in the Supreme Council—"the ultimate object of his ambition." But after that appointment took place, his feelings underwent a considerable change. He no longer manifested the same eagerness to rise to the higher post, nay, he sometimes exhibits decided indifference, and declares himself satisfied with the situation he then held. That situation being of a judicial nature, furnished employment of all others most congenial to his tastes and pursuits. He was a reader of Civil and Hindú Law throughout life, and his judicial duties coming round at stated and for specific times, his leisure could be more regularly devoted to literature and science. As a collector of revenue he was less a master of his own time, as his own letters written during the first years of his Indian career have already shown.

The extract from a letter, written in 1805, here subjoined, is expressive of the feelings he then held.

"I am grateful for the steps you have taken in consequence of what I wrote, not ambitious of a further rise, but content, if it be offered, to accept it. To speak truly, I have had a sufficient peep behind the curtain within a few years past to know the hollow

ground I should tread on, if raised to the highest station. I would not desire it, were it accessible to me, which I certainly think it never will be ; and a seat in Council, with no ulterior views, is not to be coveted by one already holding the highest situation under Council."

Towards the close of the year 1805 he was elevated to the situation to which he had looked, during the past ten years, with alternate hope and indifference. By the rules of the service, the appointment takes place for a specific period ; agreeably to which he vacated it at the end of five years. During this period he still retained his office of chief judge of the Sudder Dewany, one of the members of Council being at that time *ex officio* at the head of that court. With Mr. Colebrooke, however, the office was not merely an honorary distinction. His duties as a member of the Council not being burthensome, three or four days in every week were given to the judicial duties which the other office involved ; and some of the valuable decisions, published in the reports of that court, were the fruits of his labours at this period.

A large proportion of his time was at all periods of his life taken up by the business of office. Those who knew him at Mirzapoor and Calcutta, inform me that official duties occupied scarcely less than eight hours in every day. The mornings and evenings were, therefore, the season of leisure. At the former place they were generally devoted to study ; but the circumstances of his situation at Calcutta as well as natural inclination led him more into society, and it was less frequently the case that the evenings were available for literature. Still his interest in such pursuits was undiminished. He was regular in his attendance at the meetings of the Asiatic Society, of which he was the president, and contributed frequent and important memoirs to the volumes of its Transactions. It may be observed indeed, as the past will have in some measure shown, that his works did not owe their existence to occasions of retirement. His life in India was throughout one of constant occupation, and his literary undertakings were executed during the labour and anxieties of a public life.

It may be added as completing the picture of his active mind, that his reading kept pace with and included the current literature of the day. Even lighter works of a general nature were so familiar to him, that it was with difficulty that those who, at a later period of his life, used to supply him with such reading, could meet with works either of the standard literature of our language, or of a lighter cast, to which he had not already given a perusal.

It may be needless to add, that this picture of the diligent student

is only one half of the portrait. Great as the powers of mind were which could support such incessant labour, they fall short of those which were called forth by the execution of the tasks themselves. It is not to his having laboured so long, but to his having laboured so well, that he owes his reputation. Extensive as his works are, what he treated upon he treated profoundly, and left but little for others to glean after him.<sup>1</sup>

The *Essay on the Védas*, announced in a preceding page as nearly completed, was published in the eighth volume of the *Researches*, and constituted the first authentic account of those ancient works. It must have been a work of great labour, and could have been executed at any time by no one except himself, as, independently of the knowledge of Sanscrit which it demanded, the possession of the books themselves was not within the reach of any European, save one whose position commanded the respect, and whose character conciliated the confidence, of the Brahmins. It was also an advantage to be situated, as Mr. Colebrooke was, at Mirzapoor, where the chief part of the materials for the *Essay* were collected and translated, as that was at an easy distance from Benares, whence perhaps alone, at least in Upper India, competent assistance could be derived. The *Essay* was published in 1805, and is still the only authority available for information respecting the oldest and most important religious writings of the Hindús.

Mr. Colebrooke also observes in the same letter, that he had collected at the same period information regarding Buddhism, and this no doubt facilitated the preparation of a paper on the Jains, who are often confounded, as he observes, with the Buddhists, and have some notions in common with them. This was published in the ninth volume of the *Researches*; and in it he confirmed, or corrected from Sanscrit writings, the information gained by others from personal inquiry or observation. The same volume contained another important paper, to which it is the more necessary to advert as it treated of the only subject on which his authority was ever disputed, and on which, after long forbearance, he thought it necessary to vindicate his opinions,—the *Astronomy of the Hindús*.

In the ninth volume of the *Asiatic Researches*, published in 1807, appears a paper by Mr. Colebrooke, on the Indian and Arabian divisions of the zodiac, giving the results of an inquiry which, as he states, had been at intervals relinquished and resumed. The

<sup>1</sup> These observations on Mr. Colebrooke's *Essays on the Védas and the Jains*, and the notice of his controversy with Mr. Bentley, are from the pen of Professor Wilson.

astronomy of the Hindús had, as might be expected from the tenour of his studies and tone of his mind, been always a favourite topic with him; and on this occasion, as on a subsequent one in the twelfth volume of the *Researches*, he displayed a profound acquaintance with the writings of Hindú astronomers, as well as with the principles of the science. On this branch of Mr. Colebrooke's labours may be most seasonably used the expressions of a scholar, in like manner qualified by high Sanscrit and mathematical attainments to pronounce an opinion. In the notice of Mr. Colebrooke's contributions to Sanscrit literature, drawn up at the request of the Asiatic Society of Bengal by the Rev. Principal Mill, the following is the account given of his articles on Hindú astronomy.

"To this deeply interesting subject of inquiry, none has so completely brought the qualification desiderated by IDELER, the union of Sanscrit learning with competent astronomical science. The account of the Indian and Arabian divisions of the zodiac, in the ninth volume,—and the essay in the twelfth, on the notions of the Hindú mathematicians respecting the precession of the equinoxes and the motions of the planets,—are most valuable contributions to our knowledge on this subject. They are the best corrections to the extravagant notions of Indian antiquity, which the preceding speculations of Bailly and others had deduced from imperfect notices of the Hindú observations, and also to the crude and fanciful speculations with which a writer on the opposite side, the late Mr. Bentley, had unhappily adulterated some valuable and interesting calculations."

This reference to Mr. Bentley leads us to the controversy above alluded to. A paper published by that gentleman, in the sixth volume of the *Asiatic Researches*, was rather severely criticised in the first number of the *Edinburgh Review*. The reviewer was, it is believed, Professor Hamilton; but Mr. Bentley ascribed its origin, if not its composition, to Mr. Colebrooke. There does not appear to have been any reason whatever for such a supposition, but it took strong hold of Mr. Bentley's mind, and in his writings as well as in his personal intercourse with Mr. Colebrooke it exercised an unfortunate and painful influence. Whatever opinion Mr. Colebrooke might have entertained of Mr. Bentley's views, which are described by Dr. Mill as crude and fanciful, they are never adverted to in Mr. Colebrooke's writings, in any but a liberal and candid tone; and in his personal conduct towards Mr. Bentley, those who were acquainted with both, well know that there prevailed at all times a kindly and conciliatory spirit. The animosity inspired by his supposed participa-

tion in the obnoxious review was, however, not to be appeased; and in Mr. Bentley's last and posthumous publication, besides a virulent attack in the preface, professedly upon his reviewer, but evidently levelled at a different person, he devotes the closing chapter to the refutation of some of Mr. Colebrooke's assertions and positions, accusing him not only of unintentional error, but of wilful misrepresentation, or unfair suppression of the truth. These imputations Mr. Colebrooke thought it right to notice, however averse from controversial writing. His answer was accordingly published in the *Asiatic Journal*, March, 1826. It is short, dispassionate, and conclusive, and is of itself a sufficient refutation of Mr. Bentley's injustice in attributing to Mr. Colebrooke any other motive than a wish to investigate and promulgate the truth. It is as evident from the character of this paper, as it is certain from personal knowledge, that Mr. Colebrooke's concluding remarks are wholly borne out by the fact, when he says, "I never spoke nor wrote of Mr. Bentley with disrespect; and I gave no provocation for the tone of his attack on me."

In 1808 he contributed to the *Transactions of the Asiatic Society* an *Essay on the Sanscrit and Procrit poetry*, which is remarkable as being the only occasion on which he sought to create an interest by anything beyond a plain detail of facts. It was originally no more than a treatise on prosody; fearing, however, that the subject was too dry and heavy for publication, he attempted to relieve these defects by inserting frequent selections from the Sanscrit poets. The work, in its amended form, was published eight years (so long did his hesitation continue) after it was first written.

On all other occasions he had studiously avoided anything beyond a plain survey of the subject treated on. His style itself (if I may be allowed to criticise a father's writings), was too stiff for lighter compositions, perhaps too artificial. It was formed early, his extensive reading having given him a command of the English language, and it had a clearness and precision which well suited the scientific subjects on which his pen was chiefly engaged, but it had not the flexibility that enabled him to treat on such a subject with the liveliness and variety that is required to attract the general reader. He was himself conscious of the unattractive nature of his style, and pleaded the fact in answer to a friend who was recommending him to translate some specimens of the Hindú theatre.

It was unusually so for one who had read so largely in poetry. But he, indeed, was a singular instance of a person having read so much without its being to him a source on which he would constantly

draw in his hours of relaxation. It scarcely amounted to a decided taste, for he seldom, if ever, read any poem more than once, and inclined rather towards the prettinesses of poetry than to higher efforts of imagination. His great stores of poetical reading had been accumulated at times when other sources of literary amusement were not available. Thus at Nagpoor, having read through all the books which he had taken with him on his embassy to that court, he had recourse to an edition of the British Poets, in the possession of an officer at the station, which he read completely through.<sup>1</sup>

Although his tastes did not incline towards works of imagination generally, yet I have never seen a person on whom they produced a greater effect. In his advanced years he was compelled to seek amusement from that branch of literature, and would become deeply interested in some of those works which he read. Tragic tales affected him painfully, so much so that he shunned reading them.

I have said that he rarely read any poem more than once, I may add that he rarely read any prose author more than once either. His memory was so good that it was irksome to him to take up any literary work to which he had already given a perusal. He has told me that when young his deeper studies were usually pursued at night, and that it was no unfrequent occurrence for him to read himself stupid. During the last half hour or so of his vigils his head became confused, but when he arose in the morning, he found the subject of his reading (commonly mathematics) fresh in his mind.

I turn from this digression to notice a work which he himself valued as much, if not more, than any other of his literary labours of a legal nature.

In 1810 were published by him translations of the two most celebrated treatises on the Hindú Law of Inheritance, regarded as the leading authorities of the two great schools of law which divide India. The design took its origin in the state of his labours on the Supplementary Digest, a compilation of the law of successions having formed a part of that design. The work had advanced but little since his arrival at Calcutta, and as he had not much hopes of seeing a speedy termination to his labours, he deemed it right to place before the public as much as he could there effect; and the highest advantage, he conceived, would arise from the publication, in a complete form, of these two treatises, from which the student

<sup>1</sup> In the same way on two other occasions his mind was turned to a course of reading not familiar to him. On his voyage to India he exhausted his own stock of books, and he took to the surgeon's, and read them through also. I forget the other occasion. It was medicine again.

would be enabled to collect at one view the leading doctrines of each school, a task which could scarcely be effected through a compilation of a general, and necessarily complex, nature.

It may be deserving of mention here, in proof of the different estimation in which he regarded two of his publications, that it having been suggested to him, at a later period of his life, to publish a complete edition of his works, he made inquiries as to the degree in which they were severally in request; when it appeared that there was an occasional demand for the *Digest*, which was not the case with regard to the treatises on *Inheritance*. The circumstance surprised him, as he valued the former the least of the two, and he would not publish the *Digest*, for which there was some demand, and leave out the other, for which there was apparently none.

During the last few years of his residence in India, he was much interested in the inquiries that the doubtful question of the height of the Himalaya mountains had given rise to. The subject had, indeed, engaged his attention for some time past, and the body of evidence by which he sought to determine the problem was the accumulation of twenty years.

Stationed at Purneah, and living constantly within sight of those mountains, his attention had been first directed to the question of their height. The fact of their being visible as a connected chain at a distance of, at the least, one hundred and fifty miles, made him, as it had made others, suspect that their height had been hitherto much underrated. The result of observations taken at that time, with no better measurement of the distance than laid down in Rennell's map, assigned to one of the peaks an elevation of twenty-six thousand feet, and gave strength to the suspicious first raised. Further information corroborated his opinion. Captain Turner, in his journey into Tibet, the account of which was published in 1800, was supposed to have established the fact, that one of the peaks was distant not less than two hundred and thirty-two statute miles from the extreme point in the plains of Bengal at which it was visible, and this in the mean state of the atmosphere requires an elevation of twenty-eight thousand feet.

Succeeding years brought out additional information. During the survey of a very considerable part of the chain by Lieutenant-Colonel Crawford in 1805, some of the most conspicuous peaks were measured, and an elevation by him assigned to them equal to that originally computed by Mr. Colebrooke.

The journal of this survey being lost, or supposed to be lost, the measurements were for all scientific purposes useless. But the

circumstance of every successive guess or measurement thus tending to the same conclusion, seemed to render the subject worthy of more careful investigation. He pressed it upon the notice of his relative, Lieutenant-Colonel Colebrooke, then surveyor-general, whose attention had been also drawn to the subject by the communication of Colonel Crawford, and he entered upon the investigation with zeal.

Nearly about the same time the circumstance of the vague knowledge that the public possessed concerning the course of the Ganges up to its source, had also engaged their notice, and a survey was undertaken (very much at the instance of Mr. Colebrooke), for the purpose of clearing up the doubtful question of geography; the two discoveries therefore proceeded together.

Colonel Colebrooke intended to have conducted the survey himself, but a severe illness, which ultimately terminated in his death, caused the execution of the task to devolve upon his assistant, Lieutenant Webb. The narrative of that survey was presented to the Asiatic Society in 1810, with some prefatory remarks by Mr. Colebrooke, in which he expresses a guarded opinion concerning the height of the chain; but the measurements taken on this occasion could not be relied upon in themselves.

Nor was the question set at rest by observations taken by Colonel Colebrooke from the plains of Rohileund. The results, indeed, were similar to those first arrived at, but the distances were not determined with sufficient precision for scientific purposes. At last, however, observations were furnished to him of that degree of carefulness, as, in the opinion of Mr. Colebrooke, to resolve the question. Those observations consisted of two important sets. The first of these were the fruits of Colonel Crawford's trigonometrical survey in Nepal, in the course of which four of the peaks being carefully measured, they were found to amount, the most lofty to 24,640 feet, the lowest to 22,319.

Secondly, a high peak, seen from the plains of Gorackpoor, was measured by Lieutenant Webb, by bearings taken from four stations and altitudes from three in that province, and the mean of those observations led to the conclusion that it was of the amazing height of 27,550 feet.

The rough guesses and approximations before arrived at having been corroborated in so singular a manner by the accurate observations now made, Mr. Colebrooke deemed the evidence, which had completely convinced him, sufficiently strong to be given to the world; and he published the result of the whole in the twelfth volume of the Asiatic Researches.



In this essay the only observations relied upon as proofs are the two last. But the singular circumstance of their tallying so closely with every other that had been made, was too important to be omitted. On the one hand, the strongest presumption was raised, that an accurate observation would give a height considerably exceeding that of Mount Chimborazo. On the other hand, this was actually shown to be the case by the observations made.

The conclusion, however, was controverted. The early rough calculations and measurements, instead of being treated as a body of evidence, were examined separately, and thus examined were severally declared wanting, and set aside, while those on which the stress of the argument was rested were rejected, as being too few in number to establish the accuracy of observations taken at such great distances. The uncertainty regarding the amount of refraction in such circumstances would, it was argued, vitiate the whole reasoning. While the matter was thus declared doubtful, the cessation of the war in Nepal threw open the country to the researches of science. The measure of the Dhawalagiri by Captain Webb, was confirmed by that of the same mountain by Captain Blake, the result of which differed from the preceding by only twenty-seven or sixty-four feet; while the survey of a considerable portion of the chain, in a series of observations, barometric and geometric, conducted by Captains Webb and Hodgson, fully established the accuracy of the conclusions before arrived at. The results of this survey, supplying measurements of more than two hundred elevated positions, taken by different individuals at different times, varying distances, and with different means, at last forced conviction on the minds of the most unwilling.

I have been thus particular in relating the history of this discovery, on account of the great interest Mr. Colebrooke took in its progress. The share that he had in drawing attention to the subject, in guiding the inquiries, in giving the results to the world, in contending against objectors, and in finally establishing the fame of the Himalaya, was to him a source of continued satisfaction and delight. "I call them *my* mountains," he used to say in a tone almost of affection.

To keep the history of this discovery more connected, I have carried on the narrative through the course of many years. The triumph of the Old World over the New, was not finally achieved until 1819, or later. I revert to an earlier period, and circumstances of a very different nature.

In 1810 he married Elizabeth, the daughter of Johnson Wilkin-

son, Esq. Their union, however, was of short duration. The loss of one of their children, and the constant anxiety suffered by Mrs. Colebrooke during its long illness, injured her health and occasioned (too common in India) a predisposition to fever, which finally carried her off.

This severe blow, which affected the happiness of his remaining days, fell upon him just at a time when his family were about to proceed to Europe. He returned thither early in 1815.

Upon his arrival in England he resided with his mother near Bath, from whence in the next year they removed to the neighbourhood of London, and this city became the chief place of his abode for the rest of his life. He was there better enabled to follow up his literary and scientific pursuits than a residence in India would allow of, and he could now enjoy more fully the society of persons of tastes congenial to his own. Having become a member of the principal scientific institutions of London, he passed much of his time in the society which they afforded.

At this period his mind certainly disposed him far more towards the pursuit of science than it had hitherto done. He wrote more largely upon scientific subjects, occasionally giving essays to the *Transactions of the Scientific Societies*, and being a frequent contributor to the *Quarterly Journal of Science*. He became very much devoted to chemical experiments, to which he would turn for relaxation from severer studies. He was one of the original founders of the *Astronomical Society*; in the proceedings of which he took the greatest interest, having from early youth acquired a fondness for mathematical studies. In allusion to this he would occasionally say that he thought nature had intended him for a mathematician, and that he mistook his bent when he followed other pursuits. A singular observation, since it may be doubtful if he could have engaged in a pursuit so eminently qualified to call forth his varied and profound knowledge, as in laying open the stores of a hitherto unknown literature.

The observation was by me interpreted into something of regret, that he had not devoted more of his time to science than to the literature of the East. He was very anxious that his sons should engage in scientific pursuits, and never lost an opportunity of fostering any inclination to them that they might have at any time displayed, a desire that he did not in any degree exhibit in regard to Oriental literature. When the writer of this memoir was proceeding to India in 1832, his father was urgent in recommending to him the study of the Sanscrit language, on account of its utility to a member of the

civil service; but he never expressed the slightest hope that I should imitate his example, or turn to Oriental study, except so far as it was connected with professional pursuits.

Circumstances like these raised in me the impression that science was held in far higher estimation by him, but the conclusion that I arrived at depended on the tone of his general conversation, and on those numberless particulars in words and actions which fall under the notice of one who lives in constant and unreserved intercourse with another. It would be tedious, indeed, difficult to detail them. The opinion we form of another's mind will remain, when the circumstances which gave rise to it are forgotten.

The topic of "advice" leads me to mention one or two points frequently urged by him, and connected with his own habits of reading. It may interest many linguists to know that he was strongly in favour of the mode of instruction by translations, being that which he had adopted in his own case. His advice was to read rapidly, and with the assistance of a translation. He was ever anxious to see systematic plans of study. It had been his constant practice throughout life to task himself to a certain course every day, and the task soon became a pleasure.

Before I turn from this digression to notice his principal literary labours after his arrival in England, I should mention the circumstance of his having shortly after that event presented to the East India Company his library of Sanscrit manuscripts, a collection, the growth of many years and purchased at a very considerable expense.<sup>1</sup> Mentioning on one occasion the feelings which had influenced him to make the present, he said that he felt such a collection could not be kept entirely to himself, nor could he grudge to Oriental students the liberty of perusing the store of works brought within their reach; and he deemed it would be more beneficial to Oriental science, as well as more agreeable to himself, if it could be placed in a library, like that of the India House, where it might be accessible to all.

His earliest labour, after his arrival in England, was to prepare for publication a work on which he had been engaged during his homeward voyage. It consisted of a translation of the most celebrated treatises on Indian Algebra, accompanied by a dissertation on the state of the science as cultivated by the Hindús. The subject is interesting in the history of his writings, as being (as I have already mentioned) that which first led him to the study of the

<sup>1</sup> I speak from the recollection of many years, but I think he said that it had cost him, from first to last, about 10,000*l*.

Sanscrit language, and which was laid aside for about twenty years. During this interval the subject had not been neglected by other Orientalists. Information had been communicated to the public by Mr. Edward Strachey, but the knowledge of the state of the science was then derived only through the medium of Persian translations. Latterly one original treatise was translated by Dr. Taylor; but it appeared at Bombay only one year previous to that which now engages our attention. It was reserved for Mr. Colebrooke to collect larger materials, from which a judgment might be formed concerning the scientific knowledge of the Hindú Algebraists, and (contrary to his wont) to bring all his stores of learning to bear upon the subject, so as to complete one important chapter in the history of the science.

The important addition made to the materials already existing, consisted in portions of a work by one of the more ancient writers, the date of which, and of the more modern compilations, he was enabled, through his ample knowledge of the mathematical writings of the Hindús, to determine with no slight precision. The more celebrated treatise was clearly shown to have been written in the twelfth century, while the author of the more ancient, from which the others were professedly compiled, flourished as early as the middle of the seventh. Thence tracing up to the sources from which the knowledge of the science was originally derived, a strong presumption was raised that the more ancient writers had cultivated the science at an age at the least two centuries earlier.

An interesting question was thus raised, whether the Indian algebra was coeval with, or preceded by, the knowledge of the same science among the Greeks, the treatise of Diophantus (as far as the date can be fixed), having been written A.D. 360.

The information possessed concerning the state of the science at an early period, being vague and dependant upon the works extant, or upon obscure intimations conveyed in later commentators, the comparison could only be instituted between the works themselves, and Mr. Colebrooke accordingly entered fully upon an examination of this branch of the subject, in order to trace which of the Greek, Indian, or Arabian authors (for these latter were also included in the survey), had made the greatest progress in the science.

To follow him through the details of this survey, would be foreign to the object of this sketch. It may be sufficient to notice that, setting aside the Arabians who had cultivated the science four centuries later, the question between the other two, whether either

nation had in any way derived their knowledge from the other, was fully discussed, and some interesting and important conclusions were arrived at. Thus among the Indian algebraists it had arrived at the state of a well-arranged science at the earliest periods to which it can be traced, while some of its branches had been cultivated, to which it is not presumable that the Greeks had attained; and further, the curious circumstance was brought to light of their having anticipated discoveries which had exercised the intellect of some of the most celebrated mathematicians of modern times.

Of the manner in which the task that Mr. Colebrooke proposed to himself was executed, it will be for those more qualified to decide. Allusions might be made to the digressions appended to the dissertation, as illustrative of the comprehensive nature of his survey, and the variety of information with which it is enriched; but the world has already stamped its value on the work, and my only object, which was to give a sketch of his labours, is already answered.

In the year following the appearance of this treatise, was published a tract on the Import of Colonial Corn; the object of which was to propose a partial relief to the colonies from the restrictions on their trade, and to place them all upon an equal footing, an undue advantage having been given to the North American colonies, in allowing their corn to be entered for home consumption at times when the corn of the other colonies was still excluded.

His attention may have been immediately directed to this subject, by his having made a purchase of some landed property at the Cape of Good Hope, soon after he left India; but the views which the treatise contains were the accumulation of many years' reflection and study. Some of them we trace as far back as the date of his writings on the Commerce of Bengal.

The arguments which are adduced to support the proposal are of a very general, and, in some places, complex nature; they were, indeed, so general as to lessen the probability of their producing an effect upon the public mind. He enters largely upon the question of the advantages of colonies. He urges the necessity of fostering their produce, and of encouraging emigration. From thence his mind was led to examine the existing bars to colonial improvement, and to make the proposal for the modification in the laws, with which the treatise commences.

In the same year (1818) he published the first part of a treatise on Obligations and Contracts. It contained a rigid summary or abstract of the doctrines of the civil law on this subject, and was

intended to give in a comprehensive view the whole of this branch of the science. A second part, with a preface and introductory matter, was to have succeeded the first, but it was never completed.

Essays and writings of a miscellaneous nature occupied him during the few years subsequent to this work, among which may be numbered several which the interesting question of the height of the Himalaya gave rise to. In 1821 he undertook a voyage to the Cape of Good Hope, in consequence of the involved state of his property at that colony, and it occasioned an absence of several months. We trace the speculations of the voyager in his miscellaneous writings of that period.

An extract from a letter, written in March of the year following his return, gives the state in which his literary labours then stood. "Nothing has been published by me on the Law of Contracts, nor any other topic of jurisprudence, since the treatise on Obligations, which I published a few years ago as the first part of a larger work. Shortly afterwards, while I was preparing the sequel of it for the press, I became involved in most vexatious proceedings in chancery, by which I was so much harassed for many years, that I could attend to nothing else requiring any stretch of application. Since those troublesome proceedings were terminated (which was a little before my trip to the Cape), I have been unable to resume the habits requisite to the prosecution of that work, nor do I now expect to be able to do so. I have neither health nor spirits for the undertaking, and cannot bring myself to make the effort of setting about it. I do not think I shall ever execute any other task which requires continued attention and uninterrupted application.

"I have it in contemplation to prepare a preface and introduction to the Treatise on Obligations, as a single work, and give it with the notice of my final relinquishment of the greater work. The treatise is complete in itself, wanting nothing but a preface.

"The Supplementary Digest which I long ago announced, has been many years by me complete in Sanscrit, and in great forwardness in translation, and might be sent to the press at very short warning, and finished as the press proceeded. But I have been deterred from [the publication, observing it to be very little called for; and unless I should perceive such a call, I shall let it remain unfinished."

The first part of the Treatise on Obligations had met with a very indifferent reception, and this, combined with the causes above detailed, led to the abandonment of all thoughts of prosecuting the subject.

Nor was the other work alluded to ever completed. The only product of his long labours on the *Supplementary Digest*, consisted in an *Essay on Hindú Courts of Justice*, presented to the Asiatic Society in 1828, which comprises part of the information collected in that voluminous compilation.

Shortly after his return to England, he had a principal share in the instituting a Society for the Promotion of Oriental Literature, in the Transactions of which most of the essays subsequently written by him appeared. In the design other Orientalists zealously co-operated; and the Society (the Royal Asiatic) soon arrived at fame and dignity. A wish was expressed by some of his friends that he should be elevated to the Presidentship, to this, however, he objected, as the Society he conceived would assume more importance from being presided over by one of a higher station in society than himself. The office of Director was apparently created for him.

His first contribution to its Transactions (if we except a Discourse on the Objects of the Institution), was the commencement of a series of *Essays on the Hindú Philosophy*, a most laborious task considering the state of his health. It employed him during the several subsequent years, and was, in fact, the last great labour that he undertook.

The work itself contained a simple exposition of the doctrines and opinions of the various sects of Hindú Philosophers. In giving this he has occasion to notice points of resemblance between their doctrines and those of Grecian schools. More, however, was to have been expected from his pen. At the conclusion of the fifth and last part, he proposes to pursue the parallel more closely in a future essay. But his literary labours were then about to cease, and this interesting part of his design was never fulfilled.

This sketch would be incomplete, if I did not advert to some of the circumstances under which the last years of his literary life were passed. They consisted of a succession of family misfortunes, under which, combined with other cares and distresses, his health gradually sunk.

I pass over the loss of his mother, who died at an advanced age four years after he was united to her society, and that of younger members of his family of whom he was deprived in early childhood. The severest trials that he underwent, after the loss of his wife already adverted to, consisted in the circumstance of the several members of an united family falling away, one by one, around him, just when they were arriving at an age when the hopes which attach

to childhood assume a more definite shape, and their blight renders the loss the severest.

Shortly after his return to England his family circle had been enlarged, the guardianship of two nieces devolving upon him. Between them and their uncle, from their natural disposition and some peculiar circumstances in which they were placed, the strongest attachment grew up; they were, in fact, to him like daughters. Both, however, were lost. He was met on his return to England from the Cape of Good Hope by the shocking intelligence of the death of the youngest; and after an interval of about three years, the eldest, who had shortly before been happily married, was as suddenly carried off.

After another interval of three years, when he had begun to recover from the effects of these calamities, he was again bowed down by the sudden death of one of his sons. I know it adds but little to the narrative of sorrow like this to mention anything beyond the mere fact of the breaking of such close and affectionate ties; but in this, as in the former cases, the blow fell the severer, since the object of his love was also the object of the highest hope and pride. The son now lost was of brilliant talents, and united to his father by some similarity in his tastes, and by similar methods of study.

While the short intervals of happiness which he enjoyed were thus broken in upon by sorrow, and to these heavier calamities were superadded cares of another nature, his health began rapidly to fail him. He had unfortunately embarked much of his fortune in speculations which involved him in frequent losses, and even for a time occasioned a dread of total ruin. It preyed upon his mind; and, although he was not debarred from study, his constitution was too far shattered for him to pursue an uninterrupted course of reading. In this state he remained until 1829.

His literary labours, which had been interrupted by occasional attacks of illness, were here brought to a termination, by a dangerous and alarming attack which carried him almost to his grave. The weak state to which he was reduced, and the increasing failure of his eyesight, compelled him to give up study altogether.

It remains but to trace his life to its melancholy close. He gradually recovered his strength, and for three years enjoyed comparative health, if that can be called health where a person is reduced to almost total blindness, and rarely free from ailment of one kind or other. In the autumn of 1832 his sufferings assumed a new character, and at first with an alarming increase of severity.



Pains declared themselves in the region of the back, which, however much they may have varied from day to day, were unintermitting up to the hour of his death. The nature of the complaint he now suffered from rendered him almost entirely helpless. He quitted his bed only to be supported to a couch, and latterly the general debility which the keeping a reclining posture brought on, prevented his sitting up at all. The last three years were passed entirely on his back, and never free from pain. Yet in this prolonged misery (and his sufferings were occasionally agonizing), he scarcely uttered a complaint, and never alluded to his situation except when asking for assistance to have his posture changed.

Still his mind remained as active as ever; he found constant employment in the subjects of his reading, and took a lively interest in the politics of the day. The only occasions on which I have seen his mind at all disposed to give way arose from his deafness, which sometimes increased to such a degree as to threaten a total loss of hearing: the dread of being altogether shut out from the world deeply affected him. His deafness, like his other ailments, varied from time to time, sometimes being so great, that to keep up a conversation was impossible, and his amusement was confined to literature alone, for he could understand what was read to him in a continuous course, when he could not catch the broken remarks of conversation.

In this melancholy condition, his family circle narrowed by the loss of so many of those that were most dear to him, he was to encounter a blow in the loss of his eldest son, the severity of which can only be appreciated by those who knew what that son was. It were painful, indeed fruitless, to recall the hopes which those who knew him entertained regarding his future career. I only allude to those hopes as part of the life I am now recording. The reader will judge how dreadfully they were destroyed, when I mention that the relation between them seemed scarcely that of father and son, so singular was the ascendancy which his son had acquired over his father's mind, as indeed he did over most of those with whom he associated. The writer of these pages well remembers how constantly (even long before his brother had completed his education), his father sought his opinion, and deferred to his judgment; and this disposition grew upon him with advancing years, and in proportion to the growth of his son's mind towards maturity. The loss, already adverted to, of a son, perhaps only inferior in abilities to the one last taken away on account of the earlier age at which he died, made their father centre his thoughts and hopes more closely

on him that remained, and he now absorbed every feeling of the mind. He was deprived in him not merely of an affectionate son, constantly at the sick bed of his father; but he lost one who seemed to guide his opinions, as he did, during the last years of his life, direct his religious reading. "He was my master," exclaimed the sorrowing parent after his loss.

And now, in the depth of his sorrow, he found in religion that consolation which seemed denied to him in this world. In proportion as his mind became more closely centred on the world to which his son had preceded him, did his whole manner assume a holier aspect. His temper, which under the first attacks of illness had a disposition towards fretfulness, now under the severity of suffering became inexpressibly sweet. The calmness and resignation with which he bore the accumulation of sorrow and suffering, increased in proportion as his mind was tried.

His last earthly hope lay in the return from India of his youngest son, the only survivor of a once smiling family. He had that consolation, and the last year of suffering was passed in his society. When the writer of this memoir returned to his home, which was nearly a year after the sad event, he found his father in the state of religious resignation above described, in which he passed the decline of his existence.

In January, 1837, he was attacked by the epidemic then so prevalent. This, indeed, left him, but he was so weakened by its effects, that but faint hopes were entertained of his recovery. He rallied however, and for a time he seemed to be regaining his strength; but after a fortnight had passed in this uncertain state, a second attack gave him so violent a shock, that it became evident that his dissolution was at hand. For ten days he gradually declined; free, indeed, from any positive disorder, but latterly so reduced as to be almost incapable of speaking. At length, on the 10th of March, the scene was brought to a close. The frame was worn out.

I shall here bring this sketch to a conclusion. The object with which it was commenced was to supply some scattered notices of his life to those who were already interested in the individual, not to attempt a formal estimate of the value of his productions. The former object, so far as lay within my power, has been completed; the latter is what I do not feel competent to attempt. Others, indeed, far more qualified to judge than the writer of these pages, have affixed their value to the author's works. All, therefore, that remains is to subjoin a list of those works, which will serve more fully

than the irregular course of this narrative, to convey an impression of his acquirements and labours.

Mr. Colebrooke at the time of his death was a Fellow of the Royal Societies of London and Edinburgh; a Member of the Royal Asiatic Society of London, and Asiatic Society of Calcutta, and of the Literary Society of Bombay; Fellow of the Astronomical, Geological, Linnæan, and Zoological Societies; Foreign Member of the Royal Academy of Paris, Imperial Academy of St. Petersburg, and of the Royal Academy of Munich.

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#### LIST OF WORKS.

Remarks on the present state of Husbandry and Commerce in Bengal. 4to. Calcutta, 1795.

A Digest of Hindú Law on Contracts and Successions, with a Commentary by Jagannátha Terepanchánara, translated from the original Sanscrit. Four vols. folio, Calcutta, 1798.

Grammar of the Sanscrit Language. Vol. I. Calcutta, 1805.

The Amara Kosha, a Sanscrit Lexicon, with marginal translations. Serampore, 1808.

Translations of two treatises of the Hindú Law of Inheritance, or of the Dayabhage of Jimútavahana and Yajriyavalkyn. Calcutta, 1810.

Algebra, with Arithmetic and Mensuration, from the Sanscrit of Brahme Gupta and Bháscara, preceded by a Dissertation on the state of the Science as known to the Hindús. London, 1817.

On Import of Colonial Corn. London, 1818.

Treatise on Obligations and Contracts. Part I. London, 1818.

*Essays which appeared in the Asiatic Researches. Originally published at Calcutta.*

I. On the Duties of a faithful Hindú Widow. (Vol. iv., p. 209—219.) 1795.

II. Enumeration of Indian Classes. (Vol. v., p. 53—67.) 1798.

III. On Indian Weights and Measures. (Vol. v., p. 91—109.) 1798.

IV. On the Religious Ceremonies of the Hindús, and of the Bráhmans especially. Essay I. (Vol. v., p. 345—368.) 1798.

V. Translation of one of the Inscriptions on the Pillar at Delhi, called the Lát of Firúz Sháh. (Vol. vii., p. 179—182.) 1801.

VI. On the Sanscrit and Praerit Languages. (Vol. vii., p. 199—231.) 1801.

VII. On the Religious Ceremonies of the Hindús, and of the Bráhmans especially. Essay II. (Vol. vii., p. 232—285.) 1801.

VIII. On the Religious Ceremonies of the Hindús, and of the Bráhmans especially. Essay III. (Vol. vii., p. 288—311.) 1801.

IX. On the Védas, or Sacred Writings of the Hindús. (Vol. viii., p. 369—476.) 1805.

X. Description of a species of Ox named Gnyál. (Vol. viii., p. 487—501.) 1805.

- XI. Observations on the Sect of Jains. (Vol. ix., p. 287—322.) 1807.
- XII. On the Indian and Arabian Divisions of the Zodiac. (Vol. ix., p. 323—376.) 1807.
- XIII. On Olibanum, or Frankincense. (Vol. ix., p. 377—382.) 1807.
- XIV. On Ancient Monuments containing Hindú Inscriptions. (Vol. ix., p. 398—445.) 1807.
- XV. On Sanserit and Pracrit Poetry. (Vol. x., p. 387—474.) 1808.
- XVI. On the Sources of the Ganges in the Himadri, or Emodus. (Vol. xi., p. 429—445.) 1810.
- XVII. On the Notions of Hindú Astronomers concerning the Precession of the Equinoxes and Motions of the Planets. (Vol. xii., p. 209—250.) 1816.
- XVIII. On the Heights of the Himalaya Mountains. (Vol. xii., p. 251—285.) 1816.
- XIX. On the Dryobalanops Camphora, or Camphor Tree of Sumatra. (Vol. xii., p. 535—541.) 1816.

*Essays which appeared in the Transactions of the Royal Asiatic Society.*

- I. A Discourse delivered at the first General Meeting of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, on the 15th of March, 1823. (Vol. i., p. 17—23.)
- II. On the Philosophy of the Hindús, Part I. On the Sane'hya System. (Vol. i., p. 19—43.) Read June 21, 1823.
- III. On the Philosophy of the Hindús, Part II. On the Nyáya and Vaísésika Systems. (Vol. i., p. 92—118.) Read June 21, 1824.
- IV. Explanation of Inscriptions upon Rocks in South Bihár. (Vol. i., p. 201—206.) Read Dec. 4, 1824.
- V. Translation of three Grants of Land, inscribed on Copper, found at Ujjayani. (Vol. i., p. 230—239, and 462—466.) Read Dec. 4, 1824.
- VI. Remarks on the Valley of Setlej River, from the Journal of Captain A. Gerard. (Vol. i., p. 343—380.) Read Dec. 3, 1825.
- VII. On the Philosophy of the Hindús, Part III. On the Mímánsá. (Vol. i., p. 439—466.) Read March 4, 1826.
- VIII. On Inscriptions at Temples of the Jaina Sect, in South Bihár. (Vol. i., p. 520—523.) Read Nov. 18, 1826.
- IX. On the Philosophy of the Hindús, Part IV. On Indian Sectaries. (Vol. i., p. 549—559.) Read Feb. 3, 1827.
- X. On the Philosophy of the Hindús, Part V. On the Védánta. (Vol. ii., p. 1—39.) Read April 27, 1827.
- XI. On Hindú Courts of Justice. (Vol. ii., p. 166—196.) Read May 24, 1828.

*Published in the Quarterly Journal of Science.*

- I. On the Height of the Himalaya Mountains. (Vol. vi., p. 51—65.) 1819.
- II. Description of two Micrometers, designed and used as Pyrometers. (Vol. vi., p. 230—236.) 1819.
- III. An Hypothesis to account for the variable depth of the Ocean. (Vol. vi., p. 236—242.) 1819.
- IV. On the Limit of constant Congelation on the Himalaya Mountains. (Vol. vii., p. 38—43.) 1819.
- V. On Useful Projects. (Vol. vii., p. 48—55.)

- VI. On Fluidity, and an Hypothesis concerning the Structure of the Earth. (Vol. ix., p. 52—61.) 1820.
- VII. Account of the Method of preparing a black Resinous Varnish, used at Silhet in Bengal. (Vol. x., p. 315, 316.) 1821.
- VIII. On the Height of the Dhawalagiri, or White Mountain of Himalaya. (Vol. xi., p. 240—247.) 1821.
- IX. Meteorological Observations in a Voyage across the Atlantic. (Vol. xiv., p. 115—141.) 1823.
- X. On the Climate of South Africa. (Vol. xiv., p. 241—254.) 1823.

*Published in the Transactions of the Linnean Society.*

- I. Description of select Indian Plants. (Vol. xii., 351—361.) Read April 15, 1817.
- II. On Indian Species of Menispermum. (Vol. xiii., p. 44—68.) Read Nov. 2, 1819.
- III. On Boswellia, and certain Indian Terebinthaceæ. (Vol. xv., p. 355—370.) Read April 4 and 18, 1820.

*Published in the Transactions of the Geological Society.*

- I. On the Valley of the Setlej River in the Himalaya Mountains. (Vol. i., second series, p. 124—131.) Read Dec. 1, 1820.
- II. On the Geology of the North-eastern Border of Bengal. (Vol. i., second series, p. 132—137.) Read Jan. 5, 1821.

*Miscellaneous.*

Journal of a Journey to Nagpoor. Asiatic Annual Register, 1806.

Introduction to the Hitopadesa, prefixed to the Serampore edition of that work.

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